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THE

GREYSON LETTERS:

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

CORRESPONDENCE OF R. E. H. GREYSON, ESQ.

EDITED BY

HENRY ROGERS,

AUTHOR OF "THE ECLIPSE OF FAITH," "REASON AND FAITH,  
THEIR CLAIMS AND CONFLICTS," ETC.

BOSTON:

GOULD AND LINCOLN,  
29 WASHINGTON STREET.

NEW YORK: SHELDON, BLAKEMAN & CO.

CINCINNATI: GEORGE S. BLANCHARD.

1858.

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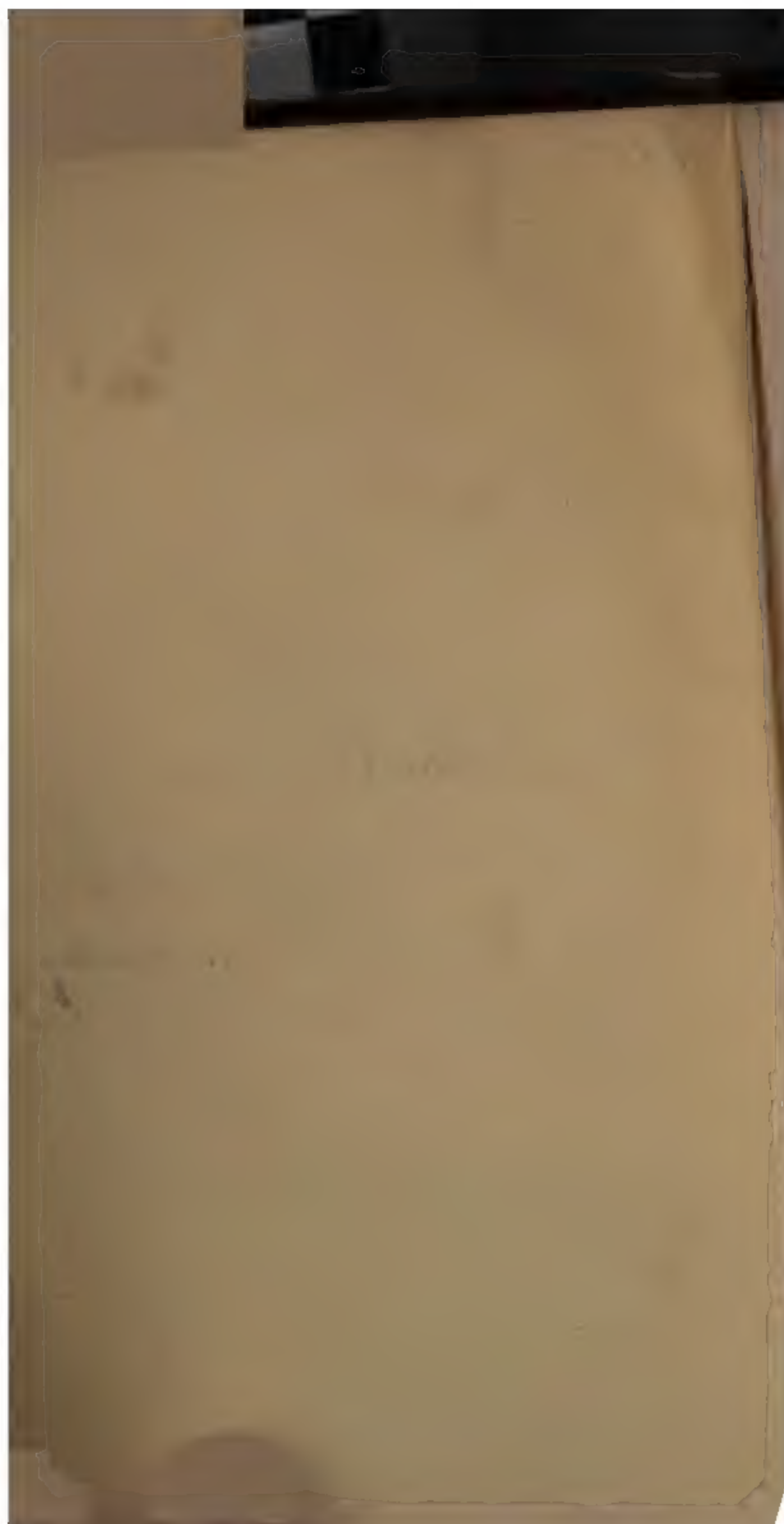
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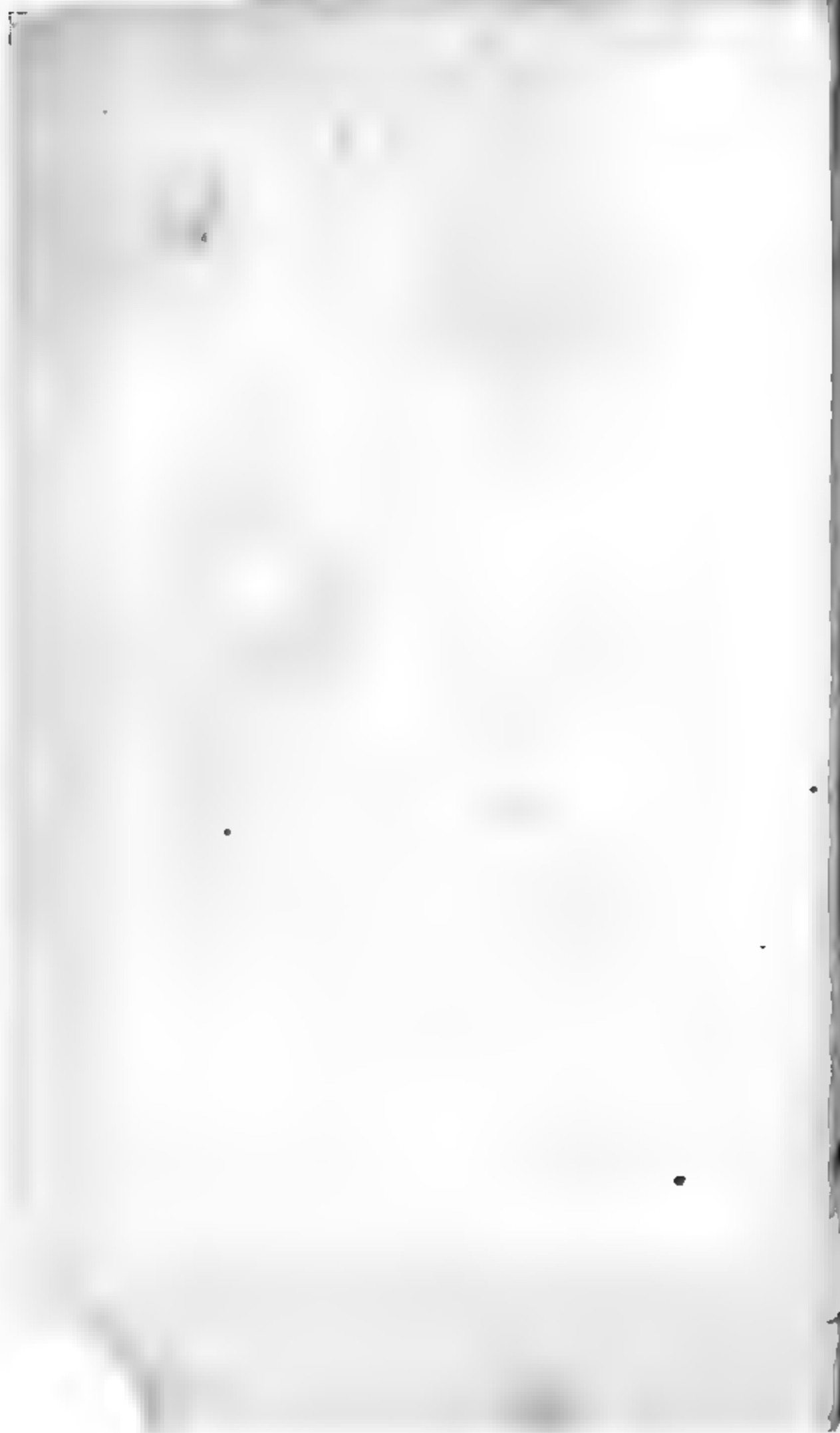
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Frank B. Pealy  
Biological Soc.  
Barton  
N.Y.









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ADVERTISEMENT  
TO THE  
AMERICAN EDITION.

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THE title of this volume might lead the reader to conclude that Mr. Rogers had performed only a subordinate part in its production. A further examination of the work, however, would quickly undeceive him. The title is, in fact, only a pleasant fiction ; " MR. GREYSON " and MR. ROGERS are one and the same person. Every letter in the volume is radiant with the genius of the author of " The Eclipse of Faith."

Whether these letters are part of an actual correspondence — whether they were written under the circumstances indicated and addressed to the persons to whom they purport to be addressed — may give rise to some doubt. A careful consideration of the internal evidence will perhaps convince the reader that this feature of the work, too, is only a fiction — that " Mr. West," and " Dr. Ellis," and the rest, are no more real than " Mr. Greyson." If this be so, it furnishes fresh ground for admiring the author's genius, so fine is the

simulation of the actual, so naturally conceived are the imaginary situations.

At this late day, no encomium on the writings of Henry Rogers can be needed. Those who have read "The Eclipse of Faith" will agree with the *London Quarterly Review* in feeling little doubt that "his name will share with those of Butler and of Pascal in the gratitude of posterity." But it may be remarked that this new work presents its author in a new light. While it shows him to be the peer of Bishop Butler as a reasoner, it also shows him to be not the inferior of Charles Lamb as a humorist. The great charm of the work is that it sets forth a *mélange* of the "grave and gay, the lively and severe," mingled in admirable proportions. Wit and humor alternate with profound argument on some of the gravest questions that concern mankind.

For the convenience of those not versed in any other than the English language, translations of all foreign words and phrases occurring in the volume have been inserted at the end in the form of notes.

It may be proper to say here, that the American edition is printed from early sheets for which the Publishers have already paid to the Author the amount for which he offered them the work.

Boston, Sept. 1, 1857.



## P R E F A C E.

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FROM a large mass of Mr. Greyson's "Letters" the following have been selected for publication. It may be inferred that the Editor thought them worthy of it; whether the public will think so, the public only can determine.

That all readers should concur in approving the whole, can hardly be anticipated. Some will think the volume contains an excess of grave matter — some, an excess of light. It is fortunate for an editor when objections are diametrically opposed, as it may be hoped they will neutralize one another. At all events, each reader, finding something he likes, may forgive something else he may wish away.

It may be permitted me, however, to say that one principal reason for admitting so many of the lighter letters, has been to relieve and diversify graver matter, and allure to its perusal. Their *specific levity*, it is hoped, may assist in buoying up and keeping afloat those more ponderous letters which might otherwise have gone at once to the bottom.

By many in all ages, and by as many in this age as in any, Truth is regarded as a medicine which should be disguised in honeyed vehicles; or, if regarded as wholesome food, is thought much more nutritious when made palatable by pleasant condiments. With the materials, so conveniently at hand, for complying with this

general humor, the Editor thought it would be wisdom to use them; since he might thereby entice young persons to read Mr. Greyson's letters on subjects which, whatever may be thought of his mode of treating them, are at least as grave and momentous as can well occupy the human mind.

At the same time, should it be thought that the lighter letters are sufficiently instructive or amusing to repay perusal for their own sake, the Editor begs to assure the reader that there are plenty more very much at his service.

The letters on graver subjects may be thought now and then a little longer than private letters generally are, or ought to be,—though brief enough in relation to the extent and importance of the topics treated. The reader must be informed that Mr. Greyson was much, perhaps unduly, impressed with the benefit that might accrue from private correspondence: he was in the habit of saying that "Affection, if it but spoke the Truth, was Truth's best pleader;" and that "if any man would submit to so odious a task as writing a long letter,—provided love plainly dictated it,—for the special behoof of some one person, it was hardly in human nature that that one should not read it with grateful attention; and that thus a little tract in the shape of a letter, might do more good than a treatise intended for everybody in general, and nobody in particular."

I know he greatly admired an amiable and very accomplished friend, (since deceased,) who, secluded from other and more public methods of being useful, spent much of his time on a large correspondence; actuated, in a great measure, by the hope of obliquely benefiting his friends, especially the young. I say obliquely; for, like a wise man, he did it without seeming to do it: there was

neither assumption, nor formality, nor dogmatism, in his letters, while there was plenty of vivacity. Mr. Greyson used to say of this friend, that he acted "as gratuitous chamber-counsel;" and that "he deserved as much praise for his quiet benevolence as a preacher who should prepare a discourse though he knew he should have but a single auditor for his congregation, or a writer who should write a book with little hope of more than a solitary reader."

Some traces of haste, here and there, will be found in these letters, and need not be apologized for; for when were private letters free from them? Some repetitions, also, of fact or sentiment (and, now and then, almost of expression) will as naturally be expected; for this, too, is an unfailing characteristic of all collections like the present.

I think I have observed that such compilations often retain details so minute as to be uninteresting to the reader; or allusions to private affairs so obscure as to be quite unintelligible. I have, therefore, for the most part, left out all such matters.

The chronological order in the arrangement has been generally adopted;—a little dislocated, however, in the latter part of the volume, for the purpose of bringing letters, on related subjects, into proximity. Some of them are without dates; and these have been inserted where they seemed most appropriate. In some of the more serious letters the reader will here and there find a vein of *persiflage*, which, perhaps, he would hardly approve in a grave treatise: he must recollect that he is not reading a grave treatise, but familiar letters, where a little innocent gayety is natural and welcome, and perfectly understood by the correspondent. Mr. Greyson, however, does not often need apology in any such matter; he may say, as Cowper said, "My readers will hardly have begun



to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air."

Another class of readers may object that expressions are often too colloquial, or the pleasantry too trivial; they must be content with similar criticism, and remember they are reading familiar letters. Fireside prattle,—table-talk,—the sheet of gossip with a friend,—who could endure in the style of a *book*? If this will not satisfy the more formal reader, I must leave Mr. Greyson to his fate.

One thing more I must in justice tell the public. It is impossible, I think, that the reader should not discern certain similarities in sentiment and style between this volume and some parts of the "Eclipse of Faith." I beg to say—on the principle of *suum cuique*—that I am largely indebted to Mr. Greyson for his contributions to that work. Indeed, I willingly ascribe to him the far larger share of whatever merit an indulgent public has been pleased to see in it, and take all its faults to myself.

Should any inquisitive reader ask to know a little more of Mr. Greyson's history than is disclosed in his own correspondence, I answer that his biography, if ever written,—and he took infinite pains to prevent any one's having the materials for the purpose,—must be written by one who knew him, in his younger days, much better than I did. I apprehend, however, that there would be but little to tell. Few men ever led a more recluse life, or one more barren of incidents that could at all interest the public.

JULY 6, 1857.

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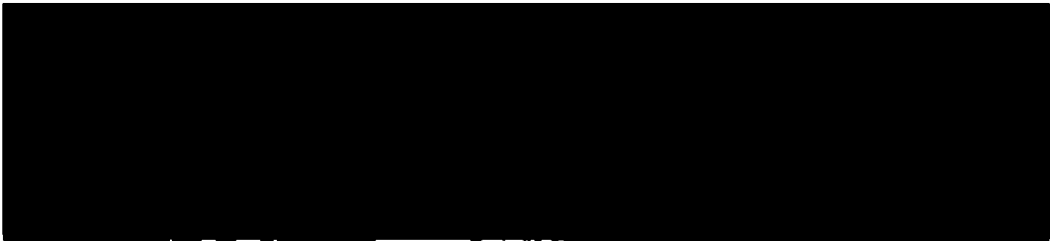
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# GREYSON LETTERS.

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## LETTER I.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

LONDON, Dec. 10, 1838.

MY DEAR WEST,

I congratulate you on having passed that painful, though hopeful, stage of convalescence, in which, with a lion of an appetite within, you are allowed only panada, tapioca, sago, and that entire genus of insipidities, of which we may say, as did Job of the "white of an egg," "Is there any taste in it?" To give such things as these to a convalescent appetite is like feeding the full-grown Hercules with pap.

There is nothing to me more amusing or gratifying, than to see a patient, who, after an exhausting illness, has at length been pronounced beyond the chances of a relapse, fairly dismissed by his physician, to what is to him the great business of life—the re-edification of the dilapidated outer man. Lean and gaunt as a wolf, ye gods! what an insatiable maw the man has! How does all thought, feeling, affection, centre in that one thing of satisfying—which yet is an impossibility—the appetite: it is as if brain, and heart, and soul, had all gone to reside in the stomach. With what gusto and infinite relish does he accept the small hourly prelibations of broth, an oyster, even an egg, which break that seeming eternity, (his impatient fancy counts it no *seeming*), between the great events of the day, breakfast

and dinner! What an infinite absurdity appears to him that languid "coy toying with food," which the mad people in health waste their time in; and what an equal folly that ceremonious leaving of the last piece on the dish, appropriated of old time to "Colonel Manners!" How spotlessly clean is the condition of every platter and cup brought away from him, and how superfluous the scullion's ablutions! How is every stray crumb picked up and appropriated with a gratitude which says as plainly as any voracious "philanthropic society," "The smallest contributions thankfully received!" How, in the eager impatience of his expectancy of a first meal of *roast*, does it seem to him that the sun and all the clocks in the universe are standing still, and that the stupendous blessing of a mutton chop will never come.

Ah me! I fear that this very description will make your mouth water in an unlawful manner, unless you happen to take it in hand in that brief *post-prandium* of half an hour or so, which is all the repose, doubtless, that the wolf within you allows

Yet I once knew a philosophic convalescent who delighted in the agreeable torments of imagination. He was pronounced out of danger, but not out of danger of a *relapse*, and was still confined to the nauseating things called "slops." At this stage his favorite reading was the "Cookery Book," which he insisted on having to bed with him; and after making up all the choicest dishes, and compounding the most savory receipts, he devoured them—in fancy. To most men, I imagine, the employment would have been torture, not pleasure; as exasperating as the *mirage* of the desert to the traveller famishing with thirst.

Far different was the case of another friend of mine. He had just recovered from an attack of fever, and at length, after centuries of delay as seemed to him, the great auspicious day dawned (an epoch in his life, not to say of the

universe) when he was to smell roast in his chamber again, and taste a delicate slice of a shoulder of mutton! His wife, his faithful nurse all through, brought up at the appointed hour to the ravening man the dainty dish — the odor of which steamed towards him more fragrant than all the spices of “Araby the blest.” But she had unfortunately forgotten the knife and fork, and hastened, after depositing the dish in the remotest corner of the room, whither she thought his drooping, wasted limbs could never drag themselves, to fetch the implement wherewith to cut off that delicate transparent sliver, which was all the medical Tantalus had, in his cruel wisdom, permitted. She was gone but a moment, but to great minds moments suffice for great deeds; and when she returned, she found, to her horror, that her supposed helpless patient, made heroically strong by appetite and the scent of burnt flesh, had dragged himself from his bed to his prize, and greatly scorning all the precautionary wisdom of doctor and nurse, and all the refinements of a shallow civilization, had seized the whole joint with both hands, and, in night-cap and with beard of a fortnight’s growth, sat tearing the flesh from the bones like a famished wolf. She told me that, what between terror of the consequences and the grotesqueness of the spectacle, she did not know whether to faint or to laugh. As to wheedling it away from him, she might as well have come between a lion and his prey.

I think it is Marryat who tells us, in one of his novels, speaking of shipwrecked folks and the Thyestes’ feasts to which hunger compels them, that “no man knows what hunger really is till he is willing to eat his own brother.” Certainly *I* do not know, if that be the case. I have sometimes thought — though perhaps *you*, with your present experience, will rebuke the fond presumptuous confidence — that I would sooner be the meat than the guest at such a

feast. Yet the *uniformity* with which the phenomenon presents itself, when that extremity of hunger presses, makes me doubt; at all events, it is one of those cases in which one would prefer presumptuous ignorance to the ghastly wisdom of experience.

Well, my friend, be thankful that you are not likely to be cast on such alternatives. Don't look on your nurse or your wife with longing eyes, I beseech you. Remember there are still beeves and sheep and corn in store, and be thankful.

I have read that, at some siege — of Rochelle, I think — the inhabitants were driven to such extremity, that after having cleared off the whole race of cats, rats, mice, and all other unclean beasts, and doubtless even stewed down cast-off buckskins, and perhaps old boots (“unco tough,” as those of Major Bellenden) for a *pièce de resistance*, they were driven even to turn their parchment title-deeds into a costly, though, I apprehend, thin *potage*. Think of snipping up three or four hundred a year for a basin of mock vermicelli, or to make one poor cup of thin gelatine! What an appropriate punishment for an old miser! Nay, methinks even the genuine, frank-hearted, hospitable man, who had called his friends together to partake of this costly, yet delicate refecton, would press them, with a somewhat rueful complaisance, to take a cut of that delicious parchment fricassee, or try another spoonful of the strong vellum soup!

Thrice happy you! who are not driven to such Apician luxuries, — Apician at least in point of expense, if not of so palatable a quality. “But go thy way, eat the fat and drink the sweet;” but ah! forget not the latter part of that exquisite verse, which so beautifully harmonizes permitted selfish enjoyment with benevolence towards others — “And send portions to them for whom *nothing is provided!*” Methinks now I hear you grumble out, with your mouth

full and your spoon going, that you have not enough for yourself! Well, well, a week or two hence will do; eat away just now; but I promise you I shall be surprised and disappointed if other people's stomachs are not the better for your long fast. You are not the man to forget a thank-offering to Him who can so easily disjoin our blessings, and give us food without appetite, or appetite without food.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER II.

O TO THE SAME.

Dec. 27, 1838.

MY DEAR WEST,

There is a peculiarity about our mental constitution as respects "association," which is worthy, I think, of more notice than metaphysicians have generally bestowed upon it. They have said much, and judiciously, on the principles and laws of suggestion in general, and many of the more remarkable facts which prove them. But I do not recollect that the fact, of which I have to-day had experience most painful, yet not unpleasing, has received the attention it deserves, though it has been sometimes touched upon. Such facts seem very instructive, both as affording an indication of the beneficence with which our mental constitution is constructed, and a presumption of the indestructible vitality which probably belongs to every thought and emotion that has once been present to us, — "being graven as with a pen of iron" on the tablets of memory "forever."

The fact to which I refer is this: — that while, from *habit*, those objects become indifferent to us which in themselves are most likely to excite vivid associations with any of the

great events of our past life, and which immediately after the occurrence of such events, *did* so to a pitch of rapture or agony, the most trivial of such objects that happens to have lain concealed, and is suddenly discovered after a lapse of years, shall prove to us that the whole power of association is unimpaired. Unlocking the cells of memory which had been closed perhaps for a quarter of a century, it shall set the soul deeply musing, and seem to chide it for being so stolidly forgetful in the daily presence of objects much more intimately connected with our feelings of that distant date; and finally perhaps, (as has been the case with me this day), dissolve us in emotions which we vainly thought we had ceased to feel for ever! Thus, for example, on losing one very dear to us, every object is a Medusa's head; the sight, the presence of mere trifles will excite profound melancholy, or melt us into tears. But as day after day passes, new associations deposit themselves, so to speak, around these objects; or rather, if I may change the metaphor, cover the exposed and exquisite nerves of the bleeding soul with a new cuticle, and thus mercifully blunt its sensibility. Thus we can still linger in the dwelling which the death of those we love has for ever darkened, and read the books again we once read together; touch the piano, over which those loved fingers strayed; sleep in the very chamber where they looked the last look of love; pass the very path which leads straight by the sepulchre where we laid them in such agony of sorrow, and often, yes, *often* never think of them at all! But meantime, in turning out the contents of an old drawer, in setting to rights a desk or wardrobe, let but the eye rest on some memorial of the past, never seen since those happy days, — trivial enough it may be, — and it seems to come straight to us from the distant land where they dwell, to upbraid us with our forgetfulness. It may be a little note, utterly valueless in its contents, but

in that sweet hand we remember so well ; a faded ribbon, love's gift in those youthful days ; an old broken pencil case ; a little book, redolent still of the dying fragrance in which love had embalmed its gift ; and swift ! — the past is present, the distant near ; solemn shapes beckon to us from the depths of time ; the voices of memory murmur in our ears, and the soul lives all its sorrows over again vividly as ever. It has been so with me to-day. It was a trifle, such as the above mentioned ; a flower, pale and faded, emblematic of the joys it told of, carefully smoothed and folded, in a little book. And so it told me when it was given, and to whom, and for what ; and how it had been taken great care of when it was first given, and that the book had been faithful to its trust. I am (shall I confess it ?) half ashamed to say that I sat down, and looked and mused at the poor symbol till memory overwhelmed me with the past, and I shed some of the most bitter and passionate tears I have shed since childhood.

No wonder that the classifications of the laws of suggestion, Hume's three, or Brown's four, or somebody else's dozen for aught I know, are insufficient to comprehend all possible cases of association. Resemblance, contrast, contiguity in time or place, cause and effect, do not exhaust them : for to these must be added any relation whatsoever between any two or more things whatsoever ; and I hope that is comprehensive enough ! Anything may suggest anything, according to the momentary mood of the individual mind, as well as according to the laws of mind in general.

But, assuredly, the things now adverted to are presumption of both the facts I set out with : — that the past but "sleeps" and is not "dead" within us ; and that it is a proof of the beneficence with which the mind has been constructed, that we become blind and deaf to objects far more fit to awaken memory than are the rarely seen trifles



that often do what the former cannot. If it were otherwise, it would be impossible to live in the world at all after any great trouble. Everything would wear perpetual mourning to us. I know no reason why it should not be so: why everything should not continue to affect us as strongly as at first, or as strongly as these insignificant things which if not seen for a time possess this strange power; for to say it is *habit* is but to repeat the fact that we are so constituted. We know no reason; we can only say that such is our constitution; and like the other laws of mind, it affords a presumption of a beneficent Creator who knew that we must not remember the *past* every day, or we could not live the *present* day to any purpose: nor wholly forget the *past*, but be held to it by invisible ties, else the discipline of sorrow and the schooling of life would be for us in vain.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

P. S.—I rejoice to infer from your letter that you are quite yourself again, and have had no relapse.

### LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

LONDON, March 22, 1839.

MY DEAR WEST,

I gave the poor man, as you requested, a few shillings, because he came from you; and if he had been without any such recommendation, I would gladly have given him as much to get rid of him. What a terrible *bore* he is! He is, I doubt not (as you say), a sensible man: but there are people whose sense is worse than other people's nonsense; and as you listen to the solid, unimpeachable, prolix, slowly-pronounced common-place, you feel almost made a convert

to paradox, and are ready to deny everything that the good soul utters. The truest and the grandest things in the world suffer inexpressibly from such doleful commentators.

I almost think there ought to be a tax imposed on every dull good man who ventures to open his lips in the way of moral prosing, considering the injury he does truth and goodness; he ought to be forbidden to preach to his fellow creatures, except by what is infinitely more persuasive than any eloquence—good deeds and an attractive example. It is melancholy to think of the havoc which a dull speaker will soon make in a crowded audience. The preaching of some good parsons is like reading the Riot Act, or reminds one of that ingenious method by which it is said the magistrates of St. Petersburg sometimes cool the zeal of a mob in that genial climate,—that is, by playing on them with a fire-engine.

I cannot conceive of what use this poor clergyman can be, unless indeed our churches and chapels were crowded to suffocation; then one or two like him might be employed to itinerate about the country and bring down crowded congregations to *par*. A very few, however, would be sufficient; the effects of the sermon, and consequently its length, might be regulated by a thermometer. But great care would be necessary in the application: for a little excess in the duration of the humdrum might end in the extinction of the audience altogether. In any case, I think, it should be provided by law that no such enthusiasm-extinguisher should be permitted to play more than an hour, lest the congregation should be annihilated. One might then read such announcements as these: “The church of that lively preacher, the Rev. —, was on Sunday sen’night so excessively crowded, even to the aisles and pulpit-stairs, that it was found necessary to send for the most ‘distinguished’ of the ‘extinguishing’ preachers, to counteract the eff

his oratory last Sunday night. So effectual was the eloquence of this gentleman, that in twenty minutes the thermometer fell ten degrees in the gallery, and the air of the church before the benediction became delightfully cool and salubrious !”

But our dull acquaintance told me one thing I was glad to hear. So young W—— is really applying to his profession in earnest. As it was said of some pope (Leo. X., if I recollect), that he would have been an excellent man if he had had but the slightest tincture of *religion*, and of another pope, that he was a very good man *for* a pope, — so I am ready to say of our young friend, that he has been a good student *for* a young man of expectations, and that he would make an excellent lawyer, if he had but the slightest tincture of “law.” He certainly has, and eminently, all the qualities of mind which would make an excellent lawyer: great logical acuteness; ingenuity in the “invention” of arguments, — I use the word in its rhetorical, not in any invidious sense, — and much subtlety and quickness of apprehension. And so I hope I shall yet hear of him shining at the bar. If not, — at least if *some* serious occupation of life does not engross him, — all his money will not save him. He is of too lively a temperament, and too excitable passions, to live a life of fat indolence. “Money answereth all things,” saith Solomon; and so it does in one sense. It can “answer the purpose” of all things that it will exchange for, or that will exchange for it; it can purchase other people’s time, industry, learning, if we have none of our own, and can even pick up a sort of second-hand faded beauty and reputation; but it cannot, amongst other things, buy the advantages which attend the very process of producing the things it buys. These advantages of our possessions come in the getting of them, and are usually far more valuable than the possessions them-

selves;—I mean freedom from *ennui*; a mind habitually preoccupied, and thus shut against many temptations, “not at home” when Satan knocks at the door; imagination and passions in the busy school and under the ferula of the practical reason, and without leisure to go gaping out into the streets in search of idleness, mischief, vain hopes, and moral chuck-farthing; a contented, because a busy mind; the consciousness of useful exertion at the day’s end; the healthful weariness which brings healthful repose; all of which are amongst the guards, if not the rewards of virtue.

Ever yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

LONDON, July, 1830.

*Eὐπρεπὰ! Eὐπρεπὰ!* Congratulate me, my dear friend. I am made, for life. If every other resource fail, I find I can turn cook.

Yesterday was a broiling day with us. I am speaking of the weather, and you see how naturally I fall into metaphors congruous to my new occupation. Thermometer at 86 in the shade.

But to my business; only follow me to the *cuisine*, and I promise you shall all but die with envy at the thought of my accomplishments.

My little household yesterday consisted of my sister and two servants. An old acquaintance of my sister’s was expected to a family dinner. I wanted a little business done in two different directions, and wished the two servants to go. “But the dinner!” said my housekeeper. I looked

despairingly through the Venetian blinds at the blazing sky. A bright thought struck me. "It is better to roast than be roasted, any way," said I; "*I* will cook the dinner." She laughed, and asked "Who would eat it?" This saucy challenge confirmed me. "Away with them," said I; "put me in possession of the kitchen. What is to be cooked?" "Oh, it is only to roast a leg of lamb; and as to the pudding, anything you *like*," said she maliciously; "but whether anybody else will like it, I have my doubts." No sooner said than done. I shut and barred the kitchen door and went to work. I cudgelled my brains to remember what I had seen in that region of fiery but pleasing mysteries when I was a child, and used to watch with wonder and delight, and keen presaging appetite, the progress of the "neat-handed Phillis." Faint were the "*antiquæ vestigia flammæ*." However, I made short work with the fiery part of the process. I looked at the joint—had dim recollections of having seen it well sprinkled with flour and then put to the fire: I sprinkled it accordingly, and commended it to Vulcan. "Let *him* look after it now," said I; "it is his business, and not mine." Then came the grand arcanum—the pudding. "Simplicity," said I, "after all, is the great secret of cookery, as of every other fine art." I resolved on a primitive form,—a pudding under the meat. That is soon made, I thought. A couple of handfuls of flour, with a little water, were mixed up in a bowl; it was too *soft*; more flour, too *dry*; more water, too soft; more flour, too dry; more water,—and so it went on, and I began to despair of the *μη ἄγαν*, the *ne nimis*—the *juste milieu*—the—what word can express the happy mean of solid and fluid, wherein the law of cohesion only just reigns? Meantime my ugly pudding was assuming alarmingly voluminous dimensions. At last I got it of the required consistence, rolled it out into a huge

plane that half covered the dripping-pan, and chucked it in to let it take its chance. I then sat down, complacently enough, at the further extremity of the cool kitchen with a book; occasionally glancing with a curious yet admiring eye, at the twirling joint, and hearing with much satisfaction the click of the jack as it reversed the motion; now and then alarmed, however, lest the whirligig should stop and involve in catastrophe my entire planetary system. At length the servants returned, near dinner-time. I abdicated with secret joy and outward solemnity, and left the kitchen to their undisputed occupancy. I heard the jades giggling, as I went up stairs, doubtless at that huge, ill-conditioned, hapless pudding that was lying sprawling and seething in the dripping-pan.

Well, dinner came at last, and was brought in amidst suppressed titters by Anne, and *not* suppressed laughter from my sister and her friend. I was as grave as a judge, and felt that, having now provided so elegant a repast, it became me to do the honors of my table with due *empressement*. I played the assiduous Amphytrion accordingly. As to the pudding, it was a phenomenon. On the south side, (towards the fire, that is,) scorched to a cinder; on the north, unknown regions of flabby, ill-looking dough: the east and west exhibited delicate tints of every shade between black and white. In the centre a Mediterranean puddle of dripping. I make no doubt that it was exquisite in taste, but unhappily I could not get any one to partake of it. I attributed this, of course, to their wish that I should have this delicacy, which was the *chef d'œuvre* of my art, all to myself. It was in vain that I assured them that there was enough and to spare; they would not hear of such a thing as depriving me of a particle of it. Not to be outdone in politeness, and determined that I would not greedily appropriate so rare a delicacy to myself, I, with

much moderation of mind, contented myself with taking on the tip of my fork the merest morsel, which, I assure you, I found rich beyond description; then, rather than seem selfish, I waived the incomparable dish away. I doubt not, after all, that my sister and her friend saw it go away with secret remorse and misgivings; or were they, after all, so envious of my skill that they were determined not to be able to bear witness, by an *experimentum gustûs*, to my superiority? If so, envy, as usual, was its own punishment; for, rely upon it, they would never taste any thing like that pudding again as long as they lived.

“But what as to the leg of lamb?” you will say. My dear friend, it was roasted on the most philosophical principles, just as the earth is roasted by the sun; quite after the planetary model; and what more would you have? There was the north and south pole, where the arctic and antarctic fat still lay in primitive whiteness. There was the torrid zone, just opposite the equatorial fire, utterly scorched up, and unendurable, as the ancients assure us we *ought* to find the tropics. But let me tell you, there was on each side of this a happy strip of a temperate zone, extending a full inch each way, from which I cut some delicious slices, and which, if there had but been another parallel or two of latitude, would have sufficed for the whole household. You may say, perhaps, that this was not an economic way of cooking a leg of lamb. But can there be a better way than that adopted by the sun *herself*, as our Saxon fathers would say, — “that fair, hot wench in the flame-colored taffeta?” The only improvement I can suggest, and certainly I shall try it next time, — that is, if I can ever get admittance into the *cuisine* for a second experiment, — is this; not to let the axis of revolution be perpendicular to the plane of the dripping pan, but exactly adjusted to an angle of  $23^{\circ} 30'$ : in this way I doubt not I shall have a

larger temperate region, and shall be able to get dinner enough for a moderate household out of a couple of legs of mutton or so. Give me your felicitations, I beseech you, on this happy occurrence in the history of your friend, and believe me

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

P. S.—Should you be giving any large parties during the coming winter, I shall be most happy, as Counsellor Pleydell said, in reference to the “sauce for the wild ducks,” to give you “my poor thoughts” on any of the more difficult *entrées* or *entremets* you may be ambitious of trying.

## LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

Aug. 1839.

MY DEAR WEST,

I have often wondered what an Atheist can have to say at a death-bed: though I suppose he is seldom present at any—except his own. It must surely be an awkward place for him. A man who thinks this world all, must find it hard to say anything consolatory to one who feels that all fleeting away from him. How consoling it must be for a wife to be told by her husband — “We are about, my dear creature, to part,—and to part forever; but let not that disturb you; let me remind you that it is a universal law. You are nothing but a chance-composition of organic molecules, nor am I anything more; we shall never have individual consciousness again. But let me tell you, for your unspeakable consolation, that you will pass into new forms, and sublimely, though unconsciously, last forever!” The consolation is “unspeakable.”



On the other hand, the Christian at a death-bed has often just as little to say ; not because nothing can be said — but because little need be. I will give you an example.

I was recently asked one summer evening by a friend (a medical man in the country, with whom I was staying) to visit the cottage of a poor fellow whose wife was dying of consumption. It was just one of the common cases ; the germs of our national plague were in her constitution from the beginning. She had married ; she had borne one child. Soon after her confinement, the symptoms of consumption rapidly developed themselves ; and she bore up bravely against the malady as long as she could. Her husband had obtained for her all the comforts he could command ; and my benevolent friend, the practitioner aforesaid, bestowed all his skill *gratis*. He had, on the like charitable terms, obtained the opinion of a physician, because he thought it would be an additional satisfaction to his poor patient to know that no means had been left untried. The physician saw at a glance that nothing was to be done — except the painful task of saying so ; a task, however, which he shrank from performing. The usual palliatives in the early and later stages had all been tried with the customary fruitlessness ; and all that, as usual, was left for the physician, was to “indorse” the customary declaration respecting his brother-practitioner’s most judicious and most useless treatment, and certify that the patient was dying in the very best way possible under the conduct of much human wisdom and skill,— which means, in all such cases, human ignorance and impotence.

I told her as gently as I could — what I supposed not only her own fears had told her already, but my medical friend also — that human art could do no more and that she must prepare to die. The husband was sitting by her bed-side. I saw a shudder pass through his frame, and that hope had only that

moment been dislodged from his heart; he looked at me with a peculiar expression of mingled stupefaction and horror. But he broke out into no womanly complaints, for he was a strong minded man. After a moment, he turned a fixed look of peculiarly solemn tenderness on his wife, and gently laid his hand in hers, as if he would arrest her as she was setting out on the dark passage. On the other hand, to my surprise, she was far less affected than he. She received the tidings with calm and silent acquiescence; then said simply, "I am prepared for it; I have sometimes felt it must be so." She glanced at the opened Bible which her husband had been reading to her, and turning to him, said — "We shall meet again; I know Whom I have believed; and you know Him too. In our Father's house are many mansions, and He has gone to prepare a place for us." She quoted some of the passages which glow with the poetry of heaven and immortality; and as he listened, his sorrow seemed to catch bright gleams from the reflection of her own calm enthusiasm; like a dark cloud at the close of a wintry day, which the setting sun suddenly lights up with a glow of transient splendor. I sat gazing upon them in speechless sympathy. They did not seem sensible of my presence; for they were absorbed in those all-unutterable thoughts which make the presence of all the world just the same as solitude. Neither did they say much; they were talking with their eyes, and were speaking volumes in moments of time.

Here was a strange thing! Here was something, then, that had reversed the natural position of these two creatures. The peace was hers, who was about to die — the perturbation and the sorrow chiefly his, who was to live: nay, whatever softened gleam of lustre relieved his sorrow was the bright reflection of her setting glory. "Let it be all a grand delusion," thought I; "yet since Death is, for all of us, the *great event of life* — in the transaction of

which we live more than a life, while those who survive have the whole of after-life affected by it,—how priceless must be that, whatever it is, which gives hopes like these !”

The cottage window was open ; the setting sun shone in with a flood of radiance ; the evening zephyr, laden with the fragrant breath of jasmine and honeysuckle, gently stirred the window-curtains to and fro, as though ministering spirits were stealing in and out of that peaceful room. At any other moment I should have regarded all this as a horrible incongruity. I can recollect that once or twice in my life, in the chamber of the dying, I have lifted the window-curtain in the weary morning watch, and, as I looked into the cold gray dawn, and saw the last pale stars so peacefully shining and heard the faint preluding twitter of the birds beginning their matin carol ; or, more incongruous still !—caught a glimpse of the broad sun lifting up his jocund face from the horizon, and calling a busy, thoughtless world to renewed activity and care,—I have thought it almost a sin in nature to be so deeply peaceful while humanity lay wrestling there in its last agony. But I had no such thoughts on this occasion. The setting sun, which shone through and through the clouds which lay on the horizon, and turned them to molten gold, seemed to me a fitting emblem of a Hope which thus converted the darkest sorrows of life into a diadem of glory. The *living* world it was which now looked so cold and dreary. It was we — the living — who seemed to have our faces towards the bleak north, and to be journeying from the sun. To him, to me also, from sympathy — *she* seemed the enviable. She was about to be born — born into Immortality ; while we, the living, were but ensepulchred in a world on which the shadows of night and death lay so heavy

Who shall estimate the value, in such an hour, of that hope and faith which thus lead the parting soul to enter on

its lonely journey with tranquillity? which enables the ear (as it were) already to catch, as we descend the dim passage between this world and the next, the sound of the key turning in the lock which shuts out from us eternal sunshine; the key of "Him who opens and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens;" of Him who Himself passed through the same "*via dolorosa*," but who, as His faithful disciples enter it, lovingly shows Himself at the gate which opens into Paradise, lets in on the ravished soul the streaming light of the everlasting day, and suffers it to catch glimpses of the ever-vernal scenes beyond?

"It is all a dream," says the Atheist. Then let me dream on, you fool. The dream is better than reality — this falsehood than the truth!

For what is *your* truth worth, most truth-loving Atheist, in that hour to which these poor souls had come, and to which all *must* come in a few short years of troubled joys, perhaps of hardly any joys at all?

Let us hold fast to our *lie*, my friend, if it be one; for it is infinitely better than an Atheist's verities. The time must come at last when the value of his theories must be tried; the *one* hour, when only to have lived in happiness, if there be nothing further to hope, will inflict a pang for which that happiness is no compensation; how much less if there be not only nothing to hope, but everything to fear!

Yours ever,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER VI.

TO MRS. C—— B——.

LONDON, 1839

MY SWEET COUSIN,

I have in vain tried to tell a lie for your sake, and say,—  
I *condole* with you.

But it is impossible. How *can* I, with my deep convictions that your little floweret, and every other so fading, is but transplanted into the more congenial soil of Paradise, and shall there bloom and be fragrant forever? How can I lament for one who has so cheaply become an “heir of immortality?” who will never remember his native home of earth, nor the transient pang by which he was born into heaven! who will never even know that he has suffered except by being told so! Shall we lament that he has *not* shared our fatal privilege of an experience of guilt and sorrow? Is this so precious that we can wish him partaker of it? My cousin, those who die in childhood are to be envied and felicitated, not deplored; so soon, so happily, have they escaped all that *we* must wish never to have known.

“Innocent souls, thus set so early free  
From sin, and sorrow, and mortality.”

who can weep for *them*, as he thinks of the fearful hazards that all must run who have grown up to a personal acquaintance with sin and misery?

An ancient Greek historian tells us it was a custom among a people of Scythia to celebrate the birth of a child with the same mournful solemnities with which the rest of the world celebrate a funeral. So intensely dark, yet so true (apart from the gospel), was the view they took of what awaits man in life! The custom was fully justified, in my

judgment, by a heathen view of things ; and if it would be unseemly among us, it is only because Christianity has brought "life and immortality to light," and assures us that this world may become, for all of us, the vestibule of a better.

"You are very philosophical," you will say ; "you talk very fine—but you do not feel as you talk." Excuse me, my dear, I talk just as I have always felt ever since I came to a knowledge of Christianity and of human life ; and often—yes, often in the course of my own, (and let the thought be consolation to you, for how do you know that your little one might not have tasted the same bitter experience ?)—often in the course of my life, as I have looked back and seen how much of it has been blurred and wasted ; what perils I have run of spiritual shipwreck ; what clouds of doubt still often descend and envelop the soul ; what agonies of sorrow I have passed through,—often have I cried, with hands smiting each other and a broken voice, "Oh ! that I had been thus privileged early to depart !"—But you cannot imagine a mother echoing such feelings in relation to her own child ! Can you not ? Come, let us see.

There was once a mother, kneeling by the bedside of the little one whom she hourly expected to lose. With what eyes of passionate love had she watched every change in that beautiful face ! How had her eyes pierced the heart of the physician, at his last visit, when they glared rather than asked the question whether there yet was hope ! How had she wearied heaven with vows that if it would but grant—"Ah !" you say, "you can imagine all that without any difficulty at all."

Imagine this too. Overwearied with watching, she fell into a doze beside the couch of her infant, and she dreamt in a few moments (as we are wont to do) the seeming history of long years. She thought she heard a voice from

as to Hezekiah, "I have seen thy tears, prayers; he shall live; and yourself shall of his history presented to you." "Ah!" "I can imagine all *that* too."

Atway she thought she saw her sweet child in the full of health, innocent and playful as her fond heart could wish.

Yet a little while, and she saw him in the flush of opening youth; beautiful as ever, but beautiful as a young panther, from whose eyes wild flashes and fitful passion ever and anon gleamed; and she thought how beautiful he looked, even in those moods, for she was a mother. But she also thought how many tears and sorrows may be needful to temper or quench those fires!

And she seemed to follow him through a rapid succession of scenes—now of troubled sunshine, now of deep gathering gloom. His sorrows were all of a common lot, but involved a sum of agony far greater than that which *she* would have felt from his early loss: yes, greater even to her—and how much greater to him! She saw him more than once wrestling with pangs more agonizing than those which now threatened his infancy; she saw him involved in error, and with difficulty extricating himself; betrayed into youthful sins, and repenting with scalding tears; she saw him half ruined by transient prosperity, and scourged into tardy wisdom only by long adversity; she saw him worn and haggard with care—his spirit crushed, and his early beauty all wan and blasted; worse still, she saw him *thrice* stricken with that very shaft which she had so dreaded to feel but once, and mourned to think that her prayers had prevailed to prevent her own sorrows only to multiply his; worst of all, she saw him, as she thought, in a darkened chamber, kneeling beside a coffin in which Youth and Beauty slept their last sleep; and, as it seemed, her own

image stood beside him, and uttered unheeded love to a sorrow that "refused to be comforted;" and as she gazed on that face of stony despair, she seemed to hear a voice which said, "If thou *will* have thy floweret of earth unfold on earth, thou must not wonder at bleak winters and inclement skies. *I* would have transplanted it to a more genial clime; but thou wouldest not." And with a cry of terror she awoke.

She turned to the sleeping figure before her, and, sobbing, *hoped* it was sleeping its last sleep. She listened for his breathing — she heard none; she lifted the taper to his lips — the flame wavered not; he had indeed passed away while she dreamed that he lived; and she rose from her knees, — and was COMFORTED.

"Ah!" you will say, — "These sorrows could *never* have been the lot of *my* sweet child!" It is hard to set one's logic against a mother's love: I can only remind you, my dear cousin, that it has been the *lot* of thousands, whose mothers, as their little ones crowed and laughed in their arms in childish happiness, would have sworn to the same impossibility. But for *you*, — you *know* what they could only believe; — that it *is* and impossibility. Nay, I might hunt at yet profounder consolation, if indeed, there ever existed a mother who could fancy that, in the case of her *own* child, it could never be needed. Yet *facts* sufficiently show us, that what the dreaming mother saw, — errors retrieved, sins committed but repented of, and sorrows that taught wisdom, — are not always seen, and that children may, in spite of all, persist in exploring the path of evil — "deeper and deeper still!" With the shadow of uncertainty whether it may not be so with any child, is there no consolation in thinking that even that shadow has passed away? For ought we know, many and many a mother may hereafter hear her lost darling say — "Sweet mother, I



## THE GREYSON LETTERS.

for a *little* while, only that I might abide  
!"

Coleridge's "Epitaph on an Infant," and let

"Ere Sin could blight or Sorrow fade.

Death came with friendly care,

The opening bud to heaven conveyed,

And bade it blossom there."

Ever yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER VII.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

LONDON, 1839.

MY DEAR MASON,

I have been writing to our charming cousin Mrs. R — a letter — of condolence I can hardly call it; of congratulation, it ought rather to be called — on the death of her little one. And why should it not? Now do not think me another Herod — for I do not wish sucklings to be sent out of the world in *his* fashion; but I never could understand the extreme sorrow which mothers in general evince at the death of very young infants; "Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted." The absolute uncertainty of a child's lot, if spared, and the certainty (as I take it) that all dying in their cradles are nurselings of heaven; not only snatched from much suffering and temptation, but made happy in Him who has "redeemed them" to himself, who on earth so expressly challenged them for his own, and who, I doubt not, will welcome them to Paradise, is sufficient to reconcile my mind to their death. Why should we grudge them their early rest, or wish to postpone it;

may, as far as we can see, endanger it, by keeping them here? When our Saviour was on earth, mothers pressed with their infants to let them be encircled in those loving arms, and have His hand rest upon their little heads one moment. Why should they repine that He takes them from their unsafe guardianship, and folds them in the "everlasting arms" for ever? that they are gone where they are to know only good without evil, and joy, but never sorrow?

But it is hard to get any *mother* to subscribe to this sound doctrine; they won't believe that a little one of theirs has aught but a bright life before him; and I dare say Madam Eve never for a moment dreamt that little Master Cain could come to any ill.

It may be morbid, — I dare say it is, — but I never could look on childhood's green leaf without thinking of the sear of autumn, and mourning that it should live to reach it. "Time that spoils all things," says Cowper, "will turn my kitten into a cat;" or as Bishop Earle says of the young child — "The older he is, he is a stair lower from God, and, like his first father, much worse in his breeches." I feel with the good old humorist — "Could the child put off his body with his child's coat, he had got eternity without a burden, and exchanged but one heaven for another."

For my part, I fancy I should not grieve if the whole race of mankind died in its fourth year. "If that were the case," you will say, "the human race would die out in the next generation." Very true; and as far as we can see, I do not know that it would be a thing much to be lamented; but since it is not His will, who permits this world of sin and sorrow to continue, it becomes us to believe, though we *cannot* see, that it is for the best.

I have often thought that if (as I think the New Testament and reason equally teach us, maugre the opinion of some uncharitable fathers who thought the contrary,) all,

who die infants, are young denizens of heaven, we may look with somewhat mitigated horror even on one of the worst practices of the heathen, — though, as usual, the undesigned consequences do not make their actions the less atrocious. Infanticide, we may well hope, has peopled heaven with myriads upon myriads of happy immortals, who, if they had grown up, would have worn scalps at their girdles, and been devout worshippers of the great “Tonguataboo,” or some such divine monster. The Arch-enemy has in this case outwitted himself; he has been rendering heaven more populous, much against his will; hounding into the everlasting fold the young lambs of the flock, who would otherwise have lost themselves on the “dark mountains.” “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;” it is well that sometimes his cruelties should undesignedly turn out merciful.

In serious earnest, however, I think that of all calamities Providence visits us with, that of the loss of an infant a few days old is, with the New Testament in our hands, about the most tolerable. That cup has but a very slight tincture of the waters of Marah; others require skilful infusion of all the ingredients of the Gospel to turn them into a cup of thanksgiving, — or even overcome their intense bitterness. But do not tell Charlotte this, — or she will certainly think me hard-hearted.

I rejoice that you have got fifty pounds for your “Dispensary” from so unexpected a source. I can hardly believe that you are not jesting with me. Surely you must have had the old miser at some advantage, given you by your art; perhaps he thought himself at death’s door, — and you secretly threatened, — if he did not do the handsome thing, — to let him die unaided by professional skill.

*Would* that be an evil? some calumniators of your art might say.

I can assure you I feel much as Fontenelle did, when

Regnier, secretary of the French Academy, was collecting subscriptions of the members for some common object, and inadvertently applied to the President Rovers (who was an old miser) a *second* time. He said he had paid. "I believe you," politely said Regnier, "though I did not see it;" "and I," said Fontenelle, "though I saw it, do not believe it."

Your miserly patient, in the complacency with which he gloats on his successful speculations, and recounts his acts of saving as if they were highly virtuous, — reminds me of an old Lancashire gentleman who lived and died under a similar delusion. "Yes" — said he, with much gravity, to a worthy clergyman who was visiting him, and enlarging on the use of the talents committed to us, — "yes, — sir, very true; God has given all of us our *talents*, which must be diligently employed. I trust it has been my own case; he has given me, I know, a talent for business, and I have a humble hope that I have not hidden it in a napkin." "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" "So let your light shine before men!"

The utter unconsciousness of the old miser that he had said anything ridiculous, must have put the gravity of the spiritual adviser to a severe test.

I remember reading a clever epigram, I think of Herder, on the man who "had hidden the single talent," and "returned his lord's money;" it is very happy; but I cannot recall it. I only remember that it felicitously hits off the sordid temper of the man, and his rigorous sense of *meum* and *tuum*; for he takes care in unwrapping the talent to reclaim the — *handkerchief*!

"Take that is — thine,  
The handkerchief is — mine."

Yours ever,

R. R. H. G.

## LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

LONDON, Aug. 1839.

MY DEAR MASON,

I am rejoiced to find that the fifty pounds' donation was a "spontaneous" act, and that your art had nothing to do with it. Wonders will never cease; at least let us hope so: this, the first of the series, is at all events a staggerer. But He who made the rock pour forth water to cheer the desert withal, can no doubt make even the heart of a miser, — the nether mill-stone is pumice-stone to it, — soft and tender.

Certainly there is no one passion of man so enthralling as the love of money; nor was it without a profound knowledge of the depths of the human heart, that those ominous words were spoken. "How hardly shall they that have riches——!" I have often endeavored to account to myself, speculatively, for the peculiar intensity of this so childish a passion; for money is really of no use the moment the miser gets hold of it. This curious idolater is content to deprive his god of the only attribute it possesses, and to live without the very things, the power of purchasing which is its solitary prerogative! I have often, I say, speculated upon the folly, but I have never been able fully to satisfy myself. It is worse than the worship of the *dead*; there, in theory at least, the incense is offered not to the deserted shrine of the departed spirit, but to the spirit itself, *ad æthera latum*; here it is to the mere mortal cerement of gold, which has been stripped of its only use, robbed of its only power; it has been voluntarily thus divested, so that the fool actually kills his god, and then falls down and adores it.

Is it that, as the love of gold itself is what moralists call

a "secondary" passion, — a passion transferred from the object symbolized to the symbol itself — men are perverted, as the instances of perverted desires and unnatural substitute, to punish themselves by more intense suffering than ever the natural passion or appetite is likely to feel. Is it that, as all acquired tastes are stronger than natural ones, this follows the same law? Is it that, as it is usually of slow growth, but of life-long continuance, the strength of habit is simply proportioned to the length of continuance and the frequency of impression? Is it that, as it grows stronger and stronger as other passions decay, it engulfs and monopolizes all the remaining energies of our nature to itself? Is it that, as it usually extends its full dominion as our minds get feebler, there is less power in the governing faculties to resist and control it, and as the whole soul falls into a childish, all but idiotic, submission to it? Or is its ascendancy due to all or several of these things combined? I know not: but certainly of all the miseries of our miserable humanity, none is more profound than is presented in the spectacle of a miser clothed in rags, swelling in burning want, depriving himself of the ordinary comforts of life, yet gloating with insane delight over that worthless pile which he has first divested of all its activity, and then poses as its apotheosis? Such a worshipper certainly makes a great sacrifice: for he sacrifices himself and his soul in the fervor of his adoration.

I heard of a sad "night-scene" the other day, which would do as an accompaniment to your "morning-scene": Your old acquaintance's soul is, I hope, opening to the dawn, though it will be a late wintry morning, and a brief day at best. The soul of the unhappy mortal of whom I speak closed to the light in mid-day; that is, he closed his own shutters, by which any man may make night when he pleases. It is a striking example of the power of riches. It

fancied riches ; for here everything is by comparison. He was a young man in the receipt of a decent salary in some merchant's office, — just enough to provide him with every comfort and some luxuries ; but nothing to spare “worth saving,” as we say. He was liberal to the full measure of his ability, and brought out his guinea to religious and benevolent objects as freely as any. He had a bequest from a distant relative, (some three or four thousand pounds, I believe,) suddenly left him. Now mark the sequel, and see what a fool human nature can make of itself. My informant tells me that a gentleman who had been in the habit of receiving this man's annual contribution to some philanthropic society, congratulated himself that, on his *next* visit to the happy legatee, he should probably get “first fruits,” “thank offerings,” and heaven knows what, *besides* the annual guinea ! A few months after the bequest he called, and to his surprise found the metamorphosed man would not give him a farthing. No representations of the astonished visitor could make the slightest impression. At last he said, “Why, Mr. —, you always used to be most liberal, and I cannot account for your present mood at all. I thought that having, as I hear, come in for a considerable legacy, you would probably have doubled your subscription: “That,” said the unhappy man, “is the very reason why I can give you nothing. While I was in the receipt merely of my salary, I could save nothing. But now that I have a larger sum, which I am not compelled to touch, and which will go on accumulating, every little I can add to it will *tell*.” And from this he could not be beaten off. It is a very instructive anecdote, and might almost make one pray — only that it is, in most cases so very superfluous — that no wealthy friend may mention us in his will, lest he should be unwittingly consigning to us the poisoned robe of Nessus !

Ever yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER IX.

TO HIS SISTER, MISS STANLEY IN INDIA.

LONDON Dec. 1882.

MY DEAR KATE,

At length comes a letter of gossip, the "gossip" itself, which, like Isaac's version, every lady "knows." I have at last, at your request, been down to our native village and traversed the "old scenes:" now, and in answer: for had I been transported to some spot in your India, or woke up like Rip Van Winkle after a thirty years' sleep, I could hardly have been more bewildered. You talk of the "dear familiar spots so bright in memory:" but I fancy you would hardly recognize them if you saw them. As to your request that I would send you a sketch or two, I am out of the question; my chosen picture is a book of sketches of some new "Troy" or "Jericho" rising in the far west, would be quite as like.

If, then, as you say, the transcripts in your memory are vivid and bright, be pleased to keep them as, for that is all you are likely to get. You speak as if everything in "Old England" were exempt from the law of change: as if its houses were fossil remains, its men and women petrifications (a good many of them may be); its scenery stereotyped. Now, my dear, I want to tell you, that we are passing through a great social revolution which will change the face of this country more in the next fifty than it has been in the last three hundred years.

It is hard to say what remote villages the huge network of our railways, when completed, will not embrace: what towns the diversion of traffic may not leave like stranded vessels, high and dry on the beach, to rot — or never to be touched by the reflux tide; or what obscure hamlets



may not be turned into busy marts of a new created commerce.

Our native hamlet is just going through the process of *decomposition* ; whether it will ever be reconstructed into something better, I know not. The great railway, of which you have heard, between London and Birmingham, and which is expected to be opened through its entire length next summer, passes straight by Berkhamstead, — sweet Cowper's birthplace, — and steers through that little homestead a few miles beyond, which is the birthplace of our less celebrated selves. It cuts the quaint garden in two, and has parted for ever the old house, which still stands in rickety desolation, from the summer house, which is tottering in still greater decrepitude on the other side of a huge embankment along which the railway passes. So there is an end of your dreams of my tasting once more the fruit of the ancient mulberry-tree, and of my sending you a honeysuckle, or rose or two, from the fragrant wreaths which used to mantle the porch. But I can send you a few cinders that have dropped from one of the "puffing monsters" that roar and rush in triumph through this scene of desolation, — if *that* will be of any solace to you. But I forget ; you can have no conception of these monsters. Well, then, imagine that sons and daughters of Gorgon and Briareus, Gog and Magog, have intermarried for some generations, and that a railway locomotive is a promising scion of the family.

Just at the end of the little meadow, and by the copse where we used to watch the setting sun, is an interesting collection of staring red brick workmen's cottages, — back to back in admirable uniformity, — with a little interval of cabbage-garden between them, and displaying a charming vista, (but not so pervious to the sun as the old foliage,) of sheets, gowns, and petticoats flaunting in the breeze.

At the end of the row, of course, there is a public house with an ambitious sign of the "Railway Tavern," whence I smelt fumes as I passed very unlike the scent of jasmine, and heard strains not much like those of your piano, my love, though they recalled it.

From thence I wandered over the four fields into the village, which, though greatly metamorphosed, and bearing certain equivocal marks of "progress" and "civilization" in the shape of three beer shops and one little methodist chapel, was not so changed as to be beyond recognition.

The little green pool by Farmer Bloomfield's, — (another occupant now dwells there, and has done so these fifteen years,) — was as verdant as ever; and in it were dabbling some geese that might, for aught I know, have been lineal descendants of those that furnished forth our Michaelmas dinner thirty years ago: but who shall say? It is certain they made much the same noise, and looked uncommonly like.

I thence strolled to the little squab church and its quiet churchyard, which, except that the last looked rather more populous with silent inhabitants than in days of yore, seemed nearly unaltered. The well-remembered grassy mounds in the corner remain untouched, and the loved ones beneath still slumber peacefully there. It is a good thing the great railway did not require to pass through the churchyard, or, sure as fate, the monster would have done so without ceremony or compunction, and hustled the poor skeletons to the right and left in premature resurrection.

I spent some time in the churchyard spelling out the names of some of the old inhabitants of our early days, and beholding, with pleased surprise, from the (as usual) truthful epitaphs, that many of them were garnished and decorated with virtues of which, while they lived, I had not the

smallest suspicion ; so artfully had Christian humility concealed their excellencies !

Superstition no longer deifies the dead, but affection *angelizes* them. For my part, I think if I were bedaubed and bedizened with one of the tawdry epitaphs I have sometimes seen in a country churchyard, it would be enough to make me get up in the night and scratch it out. There was our old acquaintance, farmer Veesey's fat wife, who resembled, (as some one said of her like,) "a fillet of veal upon castors," decked out in a suit of virtues which might not have misbecome a seraph. Several others of our old acquaintances I found were *such* wives, mothers, neighbors, friends ; so charitable, gentle, forgiving ! Surely the parson in our time must have had an easy time of it, an absolute sinecure with such a flock.

It is really odd to see so much wickedness above ground, and so much goodness under it. Ah ! if they could but change places, what a pleasant world it would be ! Or rather, perhaps we ought to say, "Who can wonder, that so much iniquity is left among the living, when such cart-loads of all the cardinal and other virtues are thus yearly shovelled into the earth by the undertaker ?" Any way, however, it is a pleasant thing to find our old friends improved by keeping ; and looking better in their winding-sheets than ever they did in silks or satins.

As I had a fine autumn day before me, I made across the country by Berkhamstead and Boxmoor to Church End, and the common beyond, where I passed so many "bittersweet," happy-miserable hours in my first school days, and recognized the very spot where, on a fine May evening, sprawling on the green sward, while my companions were at play at a little distance, I had, at eight or nine years of age, my first notion of — "Love," you will say, like a woman as you are. Pooh ! my dear ; pray do not put such thoughts

into a child's head ; no, I was no more thinking of love than you, under the blazing sun of India, are thinking of a Christmas dinner of roast beef and plum pudding. I was thinking of something very different and of much more importance ; it was then that I had, if you *must* know, my first notion of the "Infinite." "There," you will say, "that will do : pray do not trouble me with any of the metaphysical stuff of which you used to be so fond." But, begging your pardon, madam, it will *not* do, for I consider the phenomenon a rather striking one. "And pray, then, what were your thoughts ? I imagine my deeply interested sister to ask. "Ah ! it is imagination," you reply, "for I feel no curiosity in the matter." I can hear you, my dear, at this distance, right across the equator, as plain as if you were at my elbow. You are not at all interested, you protest, in any such philosophic gibberish. Well, then, I will be brief. As I lay sprawling on my back, day-dreaming as I too often used to do, and do still, I saw the stars come gleaming out in the deep azure, one after another, and I said to myself, "Suppose I could fly up to that bright star ;" looking at one relatively *near* ; that is, not more than a few billions of millions of miles or so from me.—"What if I could fly up there ?" I thought within myself again. "Well, what then ? Suppose I could get to the little faint spark beyond that. Well, what then ? And then to the fainter, paler, twinkling light beyond ; still, what then ? Should I here come to the end of the — Goodness gracious ! — end of *what* ? If there is anything to *end* the world, it must be still *something* which ends it, and *therefore* there cannot be any end ;" and so, at all events, ended the catechism ; and the notion dawned upon me that there was and must be an *Infinite*, and that "Space" was one of its forms. I do not think I have advanced much beyond that point in my philosophy to this day ; I fancy all we know is about as much

as this — that there *must* be an Infinite — and that it is a contradiction to think otherwise; that the mind has no positive notion of it, otherwise the finite would not comprehend the Infinite, — a contradiction too; and lastly, that the mode in which the notion is developed in us, is by some such process of successive augmentation of magnitudes as that to which my boyish logic was invited on that May evening. So, if you ask, as you doubtless will, for a philosophy of the infinite — *voilà !* and in a form finite enough.

La philosophie

De l'Infini —

C'est, dans ces petits mots, tout compris.\*

Have you “perpended” and “prehended” my words. “Not a whit,” you will say; “I really have not time to attend to any such nonsense; I must go and look after the Captain’s curry.” Well, I acknowledge that I have been too brief, but I was obliged not to be “*tedious* ;” to which I can imagine you saying, as the cruel Canning once said to a clergyman who gave the same reason for his brevity — “But you *were* tedious.” Now do not say that I have put the saucy speech into your mouth; I know beforehand that you will *think* some such thing; for in truth, Kate, you are incorrigible.

Well, then, to leave the Infinite. I saw on the Common the noble tree, a huge arm of which nearly crushed me when about nine years of age, as I was listening to the glorious music of its foliage, and that of its giant fellows on a stormy autumn day; — the stream in which I was nearly drowned, at about the same age, and whence I was dragged insensible to the bank; — and the pool in which I broke the ice,

\* For the benefit of the general reader, a translation of the foreign words and phrases occurring in these pages has been furnished at the end of the volume.

and sank in up to my neck — a foot or two farther in, and there would have been an end of me. I suppose. As I recalled these narrow escapes, I felt strangely moved. And Kate, by opposite emotions: now filled with gratitude from to that gracious Being who, unseen, "guided me in the slippery paths of youth," and "led me up to this:" and now with something like repining, as I looked back on many a blotted, wasted page in my life, that the little history was not cut short with the first chapter. "It had been better," I muttered, "had the tree — the stream — the lot" — but better feelings prevailed, and I ended with very sincerely calling myself an ungrateful dog. "You know," I said to myself, "that like all the rest of your promising race, you deserve more kicks than halfpence, and yet you have received more halfpence than kicks: be thankful that you have been spared so long, strive that the residue of your years may be more useful than the past, and remember 'the barren fig tree!'" And so I hope, dear Kate, that the ramble did me good.

I wish I could find a remedy for my impure ideas, inertia and despondency. They are, I often foster myself, physical in their origin; so whispers indolence, and so whispers, perhaps, good sense. But it is a conviction I am slow to supply, for it is rather dangerous to administer such crude cataplasms to an inert will and feeble faith. They may be a great way to make a man contented not to strive against invincible infirmities. By the way, our men of science — a few that is, and a few philanthropists as great fools as they — are providing admirable physical explanations of all modern evil. If a man put his hand into his neighbor's pocket, poor soul! it is entirely the fault of a peculiar cerebral organization! So runs the cant. If he commits murder, he is an unfortunate victim of a morbid condition of the nervous system! There is one comfort to be sure, that society

will hang him from a similar morbid condition of *its* nervous system; if the one be necessitated to murder, so will the other be to hang.

Thank you for the pretty little specimens of Indian coin; the two or three sicca rupees, however, I should rather have had a "lac" of. But my tastes, my dear, are not so exclusively antiquarian or foreign as to be displeased with our own coins; and if you can conveniently send a bushel or two of English sovereigns, I assure you they will range very well in my cabinet with the Indian specimens.

Your promise to send your little Kate next year, fills me with delight; her education shall be well cared for. As for your grave caution that I am not to spoil the little thing, I shall simply say, it is pretty well from a fond mother, and she too an Indian mother! Why, my dear, I shall be only too thankful if I do not find the thing already done to my hands. Kiss the little pet for me. I long to hear her gabble her Hindostanee gibberish, and sing "Ruanaah Keesti." My kind regards to the Captain, and tell him I hope he will not forget his promise to send the MS. notes of his journey to the Himalayas.

Believe me, my ever dear sister,

Yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER X.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

LONDON, Sept. 4, 1839.

MY DEAR MASON,

I have just been spending a few days with our old relation, John Wilmot. Although at the age of eighty he is as cheerful as a cricket: and with a voice by the way, nearly



as shrill. He eats heartily, sleeps soundly, is vivacious in manner and expression, and has that most lovely feature of age, sympathy with the young. He bears the "burden" of years cheerfully, and is studiously anxious not to impose a grain's weight on others, if it can be avoided.

The spectacle of extreme old age is, generally, not pleasing, sometimes how supremely pitiable! To see it hobbling and shuffling along on its three legs (according to the fable,) the third, by the way, the best of the three; flummocking down, like a sack, into its easy chair of piled cushions — uttering the inanity which indicates that intellect is gone, but exhibiting a peevishness and fretfulness, which prove that passion is still alive; who, as he sees this, with whatever compassion, would wish to be so compassionated? Who, on such terms, would wish for longevity?

But our relation is another sort of person, and makes you feel that old age may be not only venerable but beautiful, and the object of reverence untinged by compassion. The intellect, the emotions, the affections (the best of them,) all alive, — it is the passions and appetites only that are dead; and who that is wise and has felt the plague of them, does not, with the aged Cephalus, in Plato's "Republic," account a serene freedom from their clamorous importunities, a compensation for the loss of their tumultuous pleasures? In John Wilmot humanity is not a mere ruin; its grossness is refined and purged away, but that is all. He looks like some ancient edifice, only the more beautiful for the traces of antiquity. There is to me an indescribable charm in the contrast between his gray locks falling down his shoulders, and his still ruddy cheeks and sparkling eye. His whole face is a commentary on the conservative power of Virtue. How each placid and unfurrowed feature tells of moderate passions, temperance, and habitual self-control, benevolence, and, in a word, all healthful emotions! The



change from youth, indeed, is perceptible enough, but it is all legitimate — the soft chisellings of Time alone ; none of the rents, scars, and deep furrows which turbulent passions leave behind them. Such features are eloquent of goodness and its rewards.

I cannot look on him without feeling the exceeding beauty of the expression of Solomon about “the hoary head found in the way of righteousness, being a crown of glory.”

You do not expect, perhaps, and hardly wish to be as old as he ; but if you are, may such be your age ! Your death can hardly fail to prove, as I doubt not his will — “Euthanasia.”

I was amused with the pertinacity with which he refuses all offers to do for him anything he can possibly do for himself. He cannot bear to give trouble or seem an incumbrance. It may seem to some, an indication of a desire not to appear old. Yet this is not the case, for he talks freely of his being the old man ; and never attempts anything he cannot do. It is a natural dislike to be a child — a baby — again. If you seek to assist him on such occasions, when he thinks he wants it not, there is, I noticed, a little impatience — the only times in which he ever shows it. And on such occasions he will have his own way. Your only plan is to busy yourself with something else, and seem not to notice him. He will then fumble for five minutes together to tie a shoe-string or button his great coat, but do it he will. To assist him is like assisting a stammerer ; who, you may observe, will never take your anticipations of the word he tries at but cannot pronounce, or any other you may suggest to him ; but will persist in hammering away at the refractory vocable, till he has mastered it,— at least, if you have patience to wait for him,— if it takes him fortnight.

My visit has prompted me to read again Cicero’s “De Senectute,” which I had hardly looked into since I was at

school. How beautiful many parts of it appear now, to what they did then! How very superior to the greater part of his philosophical writings! The tedious Tusculan Disputations are not to be compared with it, or with the "De Amicitia."

Yours, &c.,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

LONDON, Dec. 27, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I write to introduce to you my benevolent and intelligent friend Dr. S. R—, a doctor of physic, but who has retired from practice, except as an amateur, if I may be allowed so odd an expression. Yet is it very proper; like Johnson's soap-boiler, who, wearied of the tedium of his suburban "box," and drove into London to give his gratuitous aid to his successor on "boiling days," Dr. R. has pleasure in now and then giving his advice to a patient,—advice not the less welcome that it is without a fee. I will not say indeed, for I do not believe, that the benevolent hope of doing some good has no part, or even a little, in this promptness to resume his quondam profession. But I am confident that, even without any such stimulus, the effect of long habit, and the gratification of the professional *taste*, would impel him to give his advice to any patient that asked it; though pretty sure that he could do no good. He will gloat on a "beautiful case," and detail its symptoms with rapture. Now a "beautiful case," in the language of science, is a "case" that illustrates, in the most striking manner, some doctor's theory or some scien-

tific principle, quite irrespective of the amount of suffering involved, or the disastrous issue. The "beauty" of the case is quite independent of any such accidents, and is not at all impaired by them.

A case may be much more "beautiful" which has been attended with the uttermost amount of anguish, and has terminated fatally,—provided it illustrates, with more than usual clearness, some pathological principle, and has allowed the physician, all the way through, to see how Nature has been doing her tragical work — than a humdrum case, in which the patient has been merely restored to health; probably by some obscure process of ignorant Dame Nature, which illustrates no "principle," and which that "empirical" lady has carried through without paying any attention to the physician's science at all.

Dr. R—— gets quite eloquent and enthusiastic on a "beautiful case," as he calls it. "But, Doctor," you say, the "patient died?" "Oh! of course; but what has that to do with it?" says the Doctor.

I sometimes tell him in jest that he would prefer seeing a patient die, provided he distinctly knew *how*, than see him recover, and be unable to see the reason of it. He now and then reminds me of another enthusiast in the same profession, who, having prescribed an emetic to a patient in bad, but not apparently desperate circumstances, called the next day and found him dead. The curious doctor solemnly asked if the emetic had operated, just as if it was at all to the purpose. He was told it had; he begged to see the contents of the stomach, if possible; he was gratified; he pronounced them very abominable, in very learned terms. "Well," said he, "dead or alive, it is a good thing *that* is off his stomach, any way."

But you will find my friend full both of useful and entertaining knowledge; and if you want advice for any of

your patients, do not hesitate to avail yourself of his obsolete diploma.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XII.

TO THE REV. CHARLES ELLIS, B. D.

LONDON, Dec. 11, 1855.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In the last statement of your letter I most entirely agree. Foolish attempts to get over any of the difficulties of that great mystery—the “Origin and Permission of Evil”—by insufficient solutions, are irritating to skepticism rather than sedative. For example, look at that hypothesis, not even plausible if we go at all below the surface, which Deists often resort to by way of accounting for the stupendous *physical* evils of the universe, the “*Sai Accident*” column of the world’s daily journal:—namely, the supposed inevitable effect of the establishment of “*general laws*.” It really throws no light whatever on the mystery. “If ‘general laws’ be established,” say our wise philosophers, “it would be unreasonable to demand their suspension in order to avoid occasional accidents; if the law of gravitation be in force, a man falling from a precipice will break his leg or his neck.” To be sure it is not wise to fall down a precipice; no one wants him to be suspended like Mahomet’s coffin, between heaven and earth. Certainly that were as unreasonable as the suspension of the “*general laws*.” But is the suspension either of the *man* or the *law* the only alternative? Might not the more “*general*” laws be combined with the *secondary laws* which, as we see in nature,

modify their effects, that they should never be otherwise than beneficial? Nay, *are* they not already so combined as to secure this end in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand? and will any one pretend that not even Infinite Power and Wisdom could have prevented the solitary thousandth case of accident also? Is not the muscular system of animals, for example, so perfect that ten thousand people shall pass by a precipitous road on a mountain side, and not even one of them fall, though if he *does* fall, he will doubtless be dashed to atoms? Are not horses, and dogs, and asses, men, women, and children, wriggling in and out all day through the streets of London, and not half a dozen “accidents” in the four and twenty hours? Are not tens of thousands of fires blazing, and billions of sparks flying about there from morning to night, and yet is not a conflagration a comparative rarity? Would it be *impossible* for Omnipotence, had it so pleased, to combine the general laws and the secondary laws in such a way that this infinitesimal residue of exceptional mischief should *not* occur, without any suspension or removal of the more general laws,—seeing that it would only be doing in *every* case what is already done in the immense *majority* of cases? One would imagine, to hear some of these philosophers talk, that the said “general laws” can prove their existence and vindicate their dignity only by punishing an occasional violation of them or producing a certain small amount of misery; as if the law of gravitation could not be sufficiently valued for its innumerable beneficial and beautiful results unless the equally admirable and beautiful laws of muscular action failed now and then (though very rarely) to adapt themselves to it, and to counteract the evil consequences thereof; as though it could not be adequately estimated unless it now and

then broke a leg or a neck, or sent a sensitive creature flying through the air!

No: say that the stupendous and varied miseries of our world — stupendous, I mean absolutely considered, but really not so if viewed in comparison with the good — have been allowed to enter it for reasons which we cannot comprehend, but which are especially connected with man's moral condition and education (and surely nobody that is not an idiot will refuse to acknowledge in the consciousness of his ignorance, that it may be so) and then find, finding that Reason affirms its own valid grounds for believing in the dominion of an Intelligent and Beneficent Ruler quite independent of all such difficulties as will confront, though it cannot remove them. But it removes reason and faith too, (at least it does mine) as he treated with solutions that are worse than none.

I am the more surprised when I find, as I occasionally do, some *Christians* using the above argument of "physical laws" as an answer to the difficulties in question, since they at least professedly believe in the possibility of a world in which, though there will doubtless be "physical laws" those laws will as certainly be combined with such natural moral and physical conditions (whatever those laws may be) of the inhabitants, that, as the ages of eternity roll round, there will be no "sad accidents" of pain and unhappiness &c. Men ought to consider in such questions as those just commented on, that Omnipotence cannot remove such a place, consequently there will be pain. But how? If God will now and then exhibit a serpent with the tail up, or been landed in the wing: or a falling stone, or a stray into infinite space, and is just to the immortal celestial kinsfolk, or broken his legs, or the like, or falling on the treacherous unevenness of the ground, &c.

Akin to such shallow and inadequate arguments as these

of which I have been speaking, is another often insisted on by the Deist and the Christian, by way of illustrating the *Benerolence* of the Deity! "How bountifully," say they, "is prey provided for the various species of animals! How exactly fitted is the entire organization of the lion or the shark for seizing, and killing, and devouring his food! How perfectly good is his appetite, and with what *gout* he swallows his dinner! How is all about the sweet beast subservient to his happiness!" Yes; but what, in the meantime, is to be said for the *Prey*? Is *that* devoured with as much *relish* as the other devours it? Hudibras says —

"Surely the pleasure is as great  
In being cheated as to cheat" —

but I think he would hardly have said —

Surely the pleasure is as sweet  
In being *eaten* as to *eat*!

I doubt not that the thing is all right, but I cannot accept reasoning which thus refutes itself.

I have even known Deists, and good Christian men, too, go further.

Even in *print*, I have seen it stated, by way of diminishing the impression of general suffering, that as we know that the chase is a great delight of the beast who takes his prey, so we know not what delight there may be in being hunted down (and truly I think we do *not* know!) — We are told there *may* be a delicious excitement in the stag or the hare in the attempts to baffle his pursuers! If so, surely he has the oddest ways of showing it. I shall next expect to hear a sentimental angler expatiate on the dear delight the little fishes perchance feel in getting hooked! "Handle him," says old Isaac Walton, in giving directions

for impaling a frog or worm on the hook, "handle him tenderly, as though you loved him." "Nay," such a philosophic angler would reply, "I *do* love him and am proving it; he *likes* to be thus transfixed. His wriggle is but a wriggle of delight."

No; I agree with you that such arguments as these only irritate the mind that listens to them, as all inconclusive arguments are apt to do; it is but special pleading for God, who, rely on it, does not need any such refinements, if, as Leibnitz says, we but knew all. "Shall we argue wickedly for God, and speak deceitfully for him?"

We do *not* know all, or rather we know next to nothing, and hence the difficulty; but we know enough, if we attend to it, not to allow ourselves to be baffled by what we do *not* know. From an immensity of proof, we may understand that intelligence and wisdom, and for the most part goodness, are prodigally displayed over the whole of creation, and we may find the last confirmed still further by (what I must confess *I* need) Revelation; and here we may rest, leaving insoluble difficulties unsolved. As for those connected with the "Origin of Evil," having studied them enough to know that you cannot master them, leave them alone. As Lord Bacon says, though applying the words to another subject, "Give to Reason the things of Reason, and to Faith the things of Faith."

If you *will* continue to revolve this mournful mystery, and to yield to its horrible fascination, you will darken and distress your mind. *Experto crede*. And ever remember this, that, however sublime and momentous the theme of our meditations, if it really be beyond us, it is just as much a waste of our energies and our time to meddle with it, as to busy ourselves with the veriest trifle in existence. If you look ever so fixedly into utter darkness, it is but a waste of eyes, and you might as well keep them shut. I



would remind you of what some plain preacher once said : “ Infinite,” said he, “ have been the disputes as to the *origin* of evil ; but the real question of importance is, not how we got *into* it, but how we are to get *out* of it.”

Should we not be surprised at a man who, having tumbled into a ditch, instead of scrambling out as fast as possible, lay still in the mud, resolving in himself the question, — “ I wonder how I got here ? ” About as wise are many — be not you of the number — who have spent no inconsiderable portion of their time and energies in resolving the question of the origin of “ evil,” without a thought of how they may evade its consequences.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XIII.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

LONDON, Thursday night, Jan. 9, 1840.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have nothing in the world to say to you. I write simply because to-morrow is the day on which one may send one's thoughts five hundred miles for a penny ; so that the old saying of “ a penny for your thoughts ” is likely to be more frequently on our lips than ever.

This letter is just to say “ How d'ye do ? ” and “ I am well.” If you can say “ So am I,” by way of reply, I shall consider it a cheap pennyworth.

This Postal revolution is, indeed, glorious, and well worth any fifteen “ political ” ones. Nor have I the slightest fear of the revenue ultimately suffering. In twenty years (my life for it !) the postal gains will be greater than ever.

But will not cheap postage lead, think you, to a revolu-

tion in our epistolary style? Shall we not become Spartans, and *laconise*? *Crossed* letters, I imagine, are now things of the past, and will henceforth exist only as curiosities in museums. When one had to tax a friend ninepence or a shilling for a letter, it seemed but decency to let him have something for his money, in quantity at least, whatever the quality. But now that the whole cost is one penny sterling, and that, too, paid by the writer, there will be a strong tendency to save time and trouble; and so letters will dwindle — except love-letters, perhaps, which always were, and always will be, I suppose, equally voluminous and incomprehensible — to the Lilliputian dimensions of the postage.

Pleasant — will it not be? — should the revolution lead to the universal adoption of the curt commercial style. As thus —

Dear Sir,

Received yours of 10th ult., and note contents. Pleased to find that expressions of condolence on your wife's death approved; would have enclosed some samples of "sentiment," but that is a mere *drug* since the penny postage.

Health here very indifferent; deaths on the rise; drugs firm; doctors and undertakers looking up; palls and plumes at a premium.

But "matrimonial" also active, and produce market tolerably brisk and lively. Mr. T. just presented with twins. Of "fat" infants, however, and of prime quality, a scanty supply at the present sickly season. Measles and scarlatina firm.

In the last fortnight a glut of rain; clouds dull and heavy, and go slowly off; no sunshine at any price. Thermometer operating for the rise; barometer for the fall.

"Politics," a shade easier. During the recent election,

bribes down as low as five pounds; plumpers, 23½ to 25; split votes at the usual quotations.

Yours to command,

Y. Z.

Such may perhaps be the classic hieroglyphic in which our wise sons may communicate with their friends, to the great saving, surely, of pens, ink, paper, pence, time, thought, feeling, heart, and brains!

Ever believe me,

My dear friend,

Yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XIV.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

LONDON, March 10, 1840.

MY DEAR WEST,

I went to the office of Messrs. D—, and saw the younger about your business. What a funny little man he is, — like a pea on a drum! — I got from him the memorandum you want, which I inclose; but I got it with ten times the trouble I need have had. He is what they call a *bustling* man; — and a most amusing variety of the *species* — if you do not happen to be in a hurry.

But stay; I think if Bishop Earle had happened to include it in his quaint sketches, entitled “Microcosmography,” he would have proceeded somewhat as follows: —

A “bustling” man is, to a man of business, what a monkey is to a man. He is the shadow of despatch, or rather the echo thereof; for he maketh noise enough for an alarm. The quickness of a true man of business he imitateth excellently well: but neither his silence nor his

method, and it is to be noted that he is ever most vehement about matters of no significance. He is always in such headlong haste to overtake the next minute, that he loseth half the minute in hand, and yet is full of indignation and impatience at other people's slowness, and wasteth more time in reiterating his love of despatch than would suffice for doing a great deal of business. He never giveth you his quiet attention with a mind centred on what you are saying, but hears you with a restless eye and a perpetual shifting of posture; and is so eager to show his quickness, that he interrupteth you a dozen times, misunderstands you as often, and ends by making you and himself lose twice as much time as was necessary.

He cannot keep his tongue quiet any more than his hands or his feet, which are in perpetual motion; and you cease to wonder that he does not concentrate his mind on his business, since it is more than half employed in managing the motions and postures of his body. It is to be noted that he always performs the formalities and routine of business (for which only he is fit) with much energy; yet even these things he never does well. He writeth the merest note with an air; useth the blotting-paper with a thump as if he would crush it; foldeth it with a flourish; sealeth it with such eagerness that he burneth his fingers, upsetteth the taper, and, in short, maketh noise and wind enough for twenty times the business. In his hurry he is continually mislaying what he wants, and then causeth worse confusion by turning out the whole contents of a drawer or a desk in finding it. If he comes to see you on business, he rusheth into the room, throweth down his hat and gloves, as if he had not time to place them anywhere, and, taking out his watch, expresseth his regret that he can give you only two minutes, while you think the two minutes too long. After he is gone, with a

slam of the door that goes through you, he steppeth back three times to mention some things he had forgotten. If you go to see *him* on business, he placeth you a chair with ostentatious haste, begs you will excuse him while he despatcheth two or three messengers on most urgent business, calls each of them back once or twice to give fresh instalments of his defective instructions; and, having at last dismissed them, regretteth, as usual, that he hath only five minutes to spare, whereof he spendeth half in telling you the distracting number and importance of his engagements. If he be to consult a ledger, the book is thrown on the desk with a thump as if he wished to break its back, and the leaves rustle to and fro like a wood in a storm. Meantime he overlooketh, while he gabbles on, the very entries he wants to find, and spendeth twice the time he would if he had proceeded more leisurely. In a word, everything is done with a bounce, and a thump, and an air, and a flourish, and sharp and eager motions, and perpetual volubility of tongue. His image is that of a blind beetle in the twilight, which with incessant hum, and drone, and buzz, flieth blundering into the face of every one it chanceth to meet. Your *true* man of business — with silent despatch, quickness without hurry, and method without noise — will do as much in an hour as a man of “bustle” will do in the twenty-four, and every bit of it twenty-four times as well.

Such is a sketch of the peculiar *species* of the *genus* “bustling man” whom your letter sent me to consult for you. Consider, I beseech you, the trouble I have taken on your behalf, and either allow me a liberal commission as your agent — which I am sure I well deserve — or repay me by a long letter. Recollect I have not heard from you, except the three shabby *selfish* lines which imposed this task upon me, for these three months.

Pray make my apologies to your neighbors (who, I presume, have long since returned from their "honeymoon," and possibly have had time enough by this for two or three little "family jangles"), for not having acknowledged their wedding-cards. The fact is, I get more weary of all such formalities, more and more negligent about them, and increasingly grudge the time, postage, and patience expended on them. Well, thank Heaven, in heaven they "neither marry or are given in marriage;" and so, I suppose, we shall get rid of the nuisance of "wedding-cards" at any rate. As they also "die no more," we shall be free from the yet more odious ceremonial and formalities of funerals. In *that* world there will be no lawyers, for there will be no wrongs to be redressed, and no rights that need to be contested; no physicians, for there will be no diseases to be cured, or aggravated; no clergy, for all shall be well-taught and well-behaved; and not least, there will be no undertakers! Happy world, even if known only by negatives!

Ever yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XV.

TO THE SAME.

TOTTERIDGE, HERTS, May 22, 1840.

MY DEAR WEST,

Your friend's wild hysteric laugh of anguish at the imminent peril which one so dear to him was threatened, and his burst of joyful tears when it passed away, were both very natural; and yet how paradoxical!

Your description put me on an old speculation in which I have sometimes indulged;—whether if the appropriate

symbols of joy and grief, pleasure and pain, and so of our other emotions, were all at once to change places; if, for example, the loss of a dear friend were announced by a simper or a giggle, and a sudden accession of fortune by a groan or a sigh, we should ever learn by habit to regard these as the *natural* signs of emotion; as natural as our present.

You know that there are those who hold that the "beautiful" is *wholly* factitious; that consequently the signs which express it are quite arbitrary in themselves, and derive their fancied power from pleasing associations alone; that is, from associations with what the constitution of our nature makes the sources of happiness to us; that, consequently, these signs have no specific propriety apart from such associations; that if health and youth were always united with the complexion of a corpse, and disease and pain with ruddy cheeks and sparkling eyes, our associations would soon change places; we should grow enamoured of gray hairs and wrinkles, and horrified at vivacious features and blooming complexions.

One cannot deny that it *may* be so; I certainly must admit that association, in many cases, has great power to transform the once indifferent into the beautiful or the ugly; nay, the beautiful into the ugly, and the ugly into the beautiful. Still, I cannot help fancying that there are limits to this power, and that there is a *propriety* in the very symbols (even if they *might* be reversed without permanent confusion in our interpretation of them) by which the various emotions are, originally, either excited or expressed; a propriety arising out of the entire constitution and organism of our nature. I cannot help fancying that not only are there *limits* to the magic power of association to alter or reverse them, but that even when it can do it, the effect is never so perfect as when association acts in *accordance*

with certain signs, and does not *counterwork* them ; — that is, that the symbols are natural.

If it be the case with the symbols by which the “beautiful” in objects is presented to us, it ought to be also in the symbols by which the emotion is expressed ; and, by parity of reason, with the symbols of all our other emotions. It is next to impossible to imagine, indeed, what would be the effect if the emotions were to play a masquerade, and express themselves by the opposite symbols ; whether we could ever learn (not to interpret them, — *that* we certainly could do), but whether we could ever think them to be as appropriate as those we use now. That we could learn to interpret them is plain ; we *do*, even the most arbitrary signs of emotion ; — as when an oriental smites his breast, or rends his garments, or throws ashes on his head in deep grief ; and, doubtless, if it became the fashion among us, in a similar case, to express our dejection by unbuttoning one of our braces, taking off our stockings, or swallowing a dose of rhubarb, these actions would soon become full of grave significance, and be thought admirably adapted to alleviate calamity !

What a pity that we cannot make a few experiments in this matter ! Yet it is plainly out of the question ; the above arbitrary signs, — who could attempt to bring into fashion, however admirably conceived ? Who could stand the laughter such ludicrous sorrow would create ? And as to the inversion of the *natural* signs, it would be still worse. The experimental philosopher who should laugh at a funeral or groan at a wedding, would be liable to be kicked out of the company.

I confess I am sometimes staggered when I see how astonishingly easy it often is to *accommodate* the signs of emotion to the most opposite sources, and how nearly similar in many cases is the language of joy and sorrow, of plea-



sure and pain, of hope and fear, and how frequent and rapid the interchange of smiles and tears. There are tears of joy, and smiles of sorrow, as well as tears of sorrow and smiles of joy : — nay, they often both dwell at the same moment on the same face, and so blend in their appropriate, as well as their interchanged, expressions, that it is impossible to tell which is which, under the infinitely subtle combinations of emotion to which the mysterious heart of man is subject. How often, in such moods, do we see gleaming radiance, and passing shadows, and glittering tears, all chasing each other, and melting into one another, — meeting and breaking, like the shifting sunshine and showers, the shadowy clouds and falling spangles of an April day ! Similarly, to a stranger, it is hard always to distinguish a blush of modesty from a blush of shame ; to say whether paleness be the effect of extreme fear or extreme rage ; whether a sigh, which is equally the utterance of pleasure and pain, and often partakes of both, come from the “ fountain of sweet water,” or “ bitter ; ” whether a smile be a smile of melancholy or a smile of complacency, or a smile of that pleasing sadness which is allied to both. Upon my word, as I think of these things I am half inclined to fancy that though the book of emotional expression be doubtless a very significant volume, it would be almost as intelligible if read upside down !

I was sitting at my solitary breakfast yesterday, when the servant came in with her arm bound up ; and, on asking her what was the matter, she told me with a giggle, that she had cut her wrist nearly to the bone, by the slipping of a sharp knife. She ended her account with something like a laugh, — which at first appeared rather unseemly ; but on reflection, “ Poor girl,” said I, “ the accident has made her hysterical this morning.” I told her that she should have every care taken of her, and that her sister should stay with her till she was well. Her face immediately

clouded over, and she began to whimper her thanks. This seemed strange too; "but," thought I, "the girl has a grateful heart, I see, and she cannot bear much this morning." Yet one could hardly help thinking that her giggle and her whimper might just as well have changed places.

A good woman, of whom I sometimes buy eggs, and with whom I sometimes have a gossip, came in shortly after, and told me, with a frequent application of her apron to her eyes, that she had just had a loving letter from her son, whom she had given over as one of the crew of the bark "Fair Susan," recently wrecked on the coast of Northumberland. He had, however, been unexpectedly taken up; and she told me (fairly blubbering now) that she was daily expecting to be blessed with a sight of him. "What a strange thing is a mother's heart!" said I to myself. "A looker-on might imagine that she was greatly disappointed at finding her 'Enfant Perdu' turning up again.

On going, further on in the day, to visit a cottage of a peasant in distress, I found things in so much worse case than I had anticipated, — the husband, a great hulking fellow, out of work, the wife sick, two out of three children very ill with the measles, and the third lying dead, — that I was surprised into a much larger gratuity than I had thought of giving, and promised to send doctor and nurse into the bargain. The poor fellow, who had gazed at all this misery with the stolid eye of desperation, no sooner received the money I put into his hand, than he burst into a passion of tears! How very odd! yet in the whole "signal-book" of Nature was there any more natural way of expressing his joy?

Still I had my doubts about the feasibility of the *metaphysical* theory I above referred to, and they were confirmed by a dream of last night. Hear it, and confess how much better philosophers we are in our sleeping than in our

walking moments ; though, by the way, dreams — sleeping or waking — have always been an unfailing resource with philosophers ; I do not know what they would do without them.

In my dream, I did actually, somehow, get into a world where all the signs of emotion we see here were reversed ; as for the effects — *roila !* Methought a dear friend came in to inform me that his daughter was going to be married the next day ; and “very happily,” as he said, with a long face and the voice of an undertaker. It seemed to me so ridiculous that I could not help laughing, on which he remarked that he could not think why his intelligence should have caused me any chagrin ; and giggling himself, told me he was very sorry for it, deeply cut to the heart by my behavior indeed. I immediately put on a lugubrious face of sympathetic joy, and accepted, with as deep a sigh as I could fetch up, the invitation to be present at the wedding. I went accordingly, having put on a black suit, and crape round my hat, to grace the joyful occasion.

Being too late, I met the merry procession in the streets, — dressed, of course, in deep mourning, looking very grave and solemn, and escorted by a band of music playing a tune about half as airy and quick as the “Old Hundredth,” or the “Dead March in Saul.” In short, it looked just like a funeral. When we returned home, however, the scene, methought, was not so utterly unlike a merely mortal wedding. Several were weeping indeed, and looking very doleful ; but then is it not just so in those April scenes in the waking world ? — where festivity is so curiously shadowed and checkered with a sort of “bitter sweet ?” — where handkerchiefs are often put up to fair eyes ; and the parting bride and the disconsolate mother hardly know whether to laugh or weep ? — where there is often, on the part of younger sisters, a burst of sorrow, which calls for that comic

consolation a friend of mine addressed to a broken-hearted fair one on such an occasion, — “Not lost, but gone before!” In short, they are scenes in which a stranger would doubt whether congratulation or condolence was most significantly expressed by those half-radiant, half-tearful faces.

But there could be no doubt about my theory, on going into a church! Here I found the whole audience awaiting the commencement of the service with a light and *riant* expression of devout levity, and a pious simper on every face. The preacher skipped up the pulpit stairs, taking two or three steps at a time, and began the prayers with a downright giggle, which no doubt proceeded from the depths of religious emotion. I laughed outright from a very different cause, — at the oddity of the spectacle, and was doubtless looked upon as a prodigy of pharisaic devotion for my well-timed hilarity. But suddenly, on recollecting where I was, I assumed a very grave countenance, not unmingled with indignation, and was forthwith simperingly reprovèd for my levity of manner by a scandalized old lady, who said, turning pale, that she was ashamed of my want of decorum in a place of worship! In some confusion, I escaped from the church; and was no sooner in the street than I encountered a funeral procession, of which the model seemed to be taken from “David dancing before the Ark!” The people who carried the coffin came along at a minuet pace, which I thought every moment would have brought the poor swaying corpse to the ground. A band played a lively anthem, which sounded about as funereal as “Begone dull care,” or “Life let us cherish.” The chief mourners giggled and laughed till tears really dropped down their checks (though I had difficulty in imagining them tears of sorrow), and jumped and capered in this new “Dance of Death” like mad. Perhaps you will think that the symbols of emotion might be quite as sincere, and hardly more inverted than

those with which decorous hypocrites too often carry a dead friend to his last resting place in this waking world ; that is, with a joyous heart and a mourning countenance ; and certainly the farce in my dream would often come easier to our mutes and undertakers than the doleful comic masque in which they now perform.

However, the incongruity of the spectacle seemed so laughable that I awoke, and felt that, however association may modify and transform our conceptions of the beautiful, or make the language of the emotions transpose its symbols, there are limits to its power which neither time nor custom can transcend ; and that though the constitution of human nature is very amenable to habit, habit can as little reconcile us to an absolute *bouleversement* of certain aboriginal principles of our mental constitution, as it can reconcile “eels” to the process of “skinning,” which, according to the benevolent suggestion of the cook, is “nothing when they are used to it.”

Believe me,

Ever yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

P. S. — I am living here in pleasant lodgings, and shall do so for two or three weeks. I have little to do but to scribble to my old friends, and you, as one of the oldest, are indulged with a letter proportionably long.

## LETTER XVI.

TO — M —.

TOTTERIDGE, May 29, 1840.

MY DEAR M —,

Your letter found me here, where I am staying for two or three weeks. I do not like your proposed new plan at all: better to

.... "bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of."

If you do not take heed, you will be lost to any useful purposes in life; for the time is fast passing in which you will have either the power or the will to fix yourself to the steady pursuit of any profession. Your *habit* of volatile change will strengthen by every indulgence, till you will have energy for nothing; and even if repentance comes, and perseverance as its fruit, it will come too late for successful effort. At four and twenty, and after so many changes of plan, your friends begin to look on your case with just anxiety.

The simple fact is, you are under the dominion of your fancy. It alternately plays the tricks of the microscope and the telescope with you, according as the objects are near or remote. To the present it applies itself as a microscope; and everything that is disagreeable *there* is magnified a thousandfold; to the distant future it applies itself as a telescope; and all the beautiful features of the smiling landscape, — even the seeming peaceful smoke of the distant city does not offend you, — are brought into view without any of the annoyances, the noise, the curmoil, the ill odors, which, when you get *into* them, you will experience, — just as you *have* found in scenes you have already tried. All is

“silent as a picture,” and as softened too. Cure yourself, I beseech you, of this boyish folly.

As to your new project — what earthly reason have you to think you will like it better, or prosecute it with more success, than the old. Remember, you at first attached yourself to these with the same enthusiastic expectations. In addition to your predominant tendency to day-dreaming, you are, let me tell you, too impatient for success. It will not come without toil and perseverance, — let your choice of your profession be what it may. In the present case your entire hopes are built on inexperience; you are confident because you do *not* know the difficulties and irksomeness of what you fancy you will like so well. Let me tell you a story: the application I will leave to you.

My sister, Mrs. Evans, once told me of a gallant young fellow, a lieutenant in India, who, in walking into Calcutta one evening, was vehemently appealed to by two ladies riding in a carriage. From certain spiral windings of their horses to the right and the left of the road, they suspected, either that the horses were drunk, or that their coachman was; so, thinking the last the more likely supposition of the two, they with difficulty got him to stop, and appealed to our pedestrian in uniform as to whether he could undertake to drive them into Calcutta. Now my young soldier knew no more of driving than he did of astrology; but he was as *gallant* as he was *gallant*, and no more thought of disobeying a lady (even though he should break her neck by compliance) than he would of disobeying his commanding officer, and would face any “breach,” except a breach of politeness. So, mounting the box, he took the reins from the suspected coachman, and drove off with an air; but before he had gone five hundred yards, this Phaeton upset *their* phaeton, and laid the ladies, the coachman, and himself, at the bottom of a muddy ditch.

I fear a similar mishap for you, only I doubt whether your bed may be quite so soft. Be no longer the dupe of that faculty, which, in most of us, ought to have a strait-waistcoat on between sixteen and twenty-one, but generally begins to be a little more sober after that period: I mean the imagination. It is the most *prodigious fortune-teller, but the worst prophet, in the world.*

You ought now, at four and twenty, to have learned to distrust its promises; to tone down its bright-colored visions; not to believe that every mirage in the desert is a delicious lake, — or every "apple of Sodom" the genuine fruit of Paradise, till it turn to ashes in your mouth. Return to your discarded profession, pursue it energetically, and you will yet do well. You have talent — opportunities — friends, — everything but steadfastness of soul. Get this, and you are made; without it, you are lost. I wish you well for your father's sake, but no less for your own; so forgive these words of honest freedom. Nay, rather thank me, and praise me, for not keeping a treacherous silence. Your conscience must tell you that I can have no other motive for writing than the hope of doing you good.

Believe me,

Ever faithfully yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XVII.

TO THE REV. C. ELLIS, B. D.

PENTONVILLE, Nov. 1840.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I do not half like your falling into that little bit of "cant" about that good man T. D——. "His troubles," you say, "are an unaccountable mystery of Providence." There is



nothing more unreasonable than the talk of what are often called "mysteries of Providence," if by that be meant, that they leave us in any doubt whatever as to the equity and justice of the Divine Government. The sufferings and calamities which are often allowed to gather round excellent persons, are, in truth (as I will show you in five words,) no mysteries at all; certainly not half so much so as the prosperity of flaunting and triumphant wickedness. That there *are* great mysteries connected with the divine Government I admit; so great, that no tool of reason, however fine its edge or hard its temper, can touch the adamant. Our only way of dealing with the objections thence derived, is by showing that there is yet stronger evidence for the existence of a supremely wise and intelligent Ruler of the universe, than for admitting the conclusion to which such invincible objections would lead us, — that there is no such Ruler at all. These difficulties can only be met obliquely, and by an *ad absurdum* argumentation. Such are the "origin of evil," and some of its consequences; such the sufferings and death of the brute creation, and of innocent infancy. These problems, baffled reason in vain strives to solve, except in the way just mentioned; and for any direct solution, remits us to the logic of faith and hope — not of syllogism or induction.

But what are ordinarily called "mysteries of Providence," and about which irreligious men, and sometimes religious men too, make such a hubbub, are none at all to me; nor, I fancy, to you, (if you reflect,) in spite of that little bit of current "cant" for which I have ventured to rebuke you; nay, I will dare to say, they can be no objection to any *Theist*, in the world; to none who profess to believe in a Divine Government of the universe at all. As to Atheists, *they* need not surely wonder at anything; nor, of course, can they *blame* anybody for anything that may befall them.

They might, on their theory, as well "bay the moon," or chide the winds for howling, as profess to find anything unaccountable in blind chance or a blind necessity; for of what, on any such hypothesis, can there be any account? To them *all* must be "mystery;" and perhaps the greatest mystery of all ought to be, that the world jogs on as well as it does! But to Theists, I say such things as you mention are no mysteries; and if you ask for my proof, it is this: that I have never met with the man, nor have you, nor has any one else that I ever heard of, who would deliberately lay his hand on his heart and say, "The dispensations of God have been such to me, that not only I cannot see the goodness and mercy of them all,—which may well be,—but I deny the *justice* of them. I do not mean that I do not see the connection between this or that trouble and some immediately preceding conduct,—for this may also happen to anybody,—but I dare to say that, on the whole retrospect of my life, the conduct of God has been *unjust* to me; that I have on the whole suffered more than I deserved." I repeat, I have never known any man who has been willing to say any such thing; to affirm, "If I were admitted to plead my own cause with God, I would accuse him of having given me, on the entire balance of my life, more evil than I have merited." Now I say that unless you can find such a man, there is, *practically*, an end of "mysteries" in the case. That no man, with even that self-partiality which is the characteristic of us all, will deliberately venture (I will except, if you like, half a dozen madmen in as many centuries) to accuse God of injustice, shows us that there is really no "mystery" in the matter; —for where *is* the mystery, if, whatever the sufferings and calamities which befall us, *each man for himself* is ready to affirm, "I have received less of evil than I have deserved?"

You may say, perhaps, "Yes, each man may say it for *himself*, but he finds it difficult to see it in the case of *others*." Exactly; but that is the very source of the fallacy; it is because we judge of others by the *outside*, and of ourselves by the *inside*; of them, by our eyes—by the very little—for it is little—that each man knows of his fellows' interior and far more important history; and of ourselves, from our consciousness.

This last alone must speak, and if it lets judgment go by default, by declining the challenge I have referred to, (as in each man it does,) it is sufficient to answer the objection of "mystery!" You see in the present case, it is your friend Thomas D—— you are thinking of, and not yourself, when you express yourself thus half repiningly. For aught I can see, you suffered just as "unaccountable things" ten years ago, and I lately; and yet you and I were not at all more disposed, *for ourselves* to think our case "hard," as people say, than I dare say T. D—— is to judge his own so.

You will say, perhaps, "But is it not rather an uncharitable thing, when we see great and strangely accumulated calamities befalling any one, to suppose that there is some special concealed iniquity that calls for them?" It would be, undoubtedly, *most* uncharitable thus to judge; but neither is it necessary. It *may* be, (and I doubt not often is,) some concealed iniquity, of which the world suspected nothing, (for such cases do often come to light,) which is at the bottom of the matter; but as the world knows nothing, the world should say nothing, no, nor even surmise anything; there are plenty of other alternatives. It may be subtle evils, of which man, till better taught by discipline, thinks little, but which, in the estimate of God, may be of great moment, that require correction; it may be spiritual, and not social or moral vices, which are thus chastised; it may be, not flagrant acts, but *habits* of mind and feeling and

temper, for which a man may not be thought much worse by his fellows, but which, unsubdued, may bar heaven's gates against him; it may be religious apathy, ingratitude, thoughtlessness, which thus need rebuking; the visitation may be not directly punitive at all, though not inequitable in relation to the man's entire conduct; it may be designed as corrective of what is still evil in him, or as a means of developing nobler forms of good; it may be for the mere pruning of a too florid and unfruitful virtue, which runs out into luxuriant foliage of talk and spiritual pride. But still, to return to my *first* assertion; as the man *himself* does not accuse the justice of God, but avows that he believes His proceedings equitable, you, without forming any hypothesis of the special reasons for them, ought to have done with "mysteries." It is not uncharitable to the man to suppose there is no injustice, when he declares there is none; and as it appears that each of us thinks the same in his own case, we are not uncharitable in thus adopting the man's own estimate of himself; for it seems, we think no worse of him than we do of ourselves; and though we are commanded to "love our neighbors as ourselves," I know not where it is written that we are to love him better than ourselves. Excuse this long "prelection," on an expression which I am sure, on reflection, you will see the impropriety of. To judge of God's proceedings towards any body on earth *besides ourselves* (so long as the window in each man's breast remains shut), is just as wise as to criticise the sentence of a judge, without knowing anything of the law or the evidence, or to pronounce on the prescriptions of a physician without knowing either his science or the symptoms of the patient. Each man must judge for himself; and in that case, it seems each man gives a sentence for God; and till you find a man who does *not*, let us cease to talk of the mysteries of Providence in such cases as those of T. D——.

If you say you mean nothing more than that the phenomena are unaccountable to you, that is very true ; only then you ought, in strictness, no more to speak about the mysteries of Providence than the mysteries of T. D——.

Yours ever faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

### LETTER XVIII.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

PENTONVILLE, LONDON, Jan. 8, 1841.

MY DEAR MASON,

I am very sorry to hear that my young friend Edward exhibits such a love for the class of amusements you mention. Innocent they may be in themselves, as you say, and within certain limits they are ; but, pursued with avidity and recommended by indolence (to which they are welcome and which they tend to feed), they ever lie on the frontiers of vice, and a vacant mind easily crosses the line. Yet I doubt whether it will be wise to attempt to argue with him much, perhaps not at all, on the abstract impropriety of his course. You, with thirty years more experience of life and human nature on your shoulders, may know, and *do* know full well, that the very greenest and most innocent looking, “by path meadow” in the world, may lead, by little and little, to the most dreadful deflections from the “highroad to virtue and happiness ; while it may be quite impossible to show this to an inexperienced youth, not to say that if he does *not* see it, argument will but make him, in all probability, more obstinate, besides weakening parental authority. If he were only ten years of age this course might do ; but at eighteen or nineteen it is hardly practicable, and never wise. Take my advice ;

never seem, at this comparatively harmless point, even to know of his gayety, but have him down into the country, and, as idleness seems to have been his bane, let plenty of employment be the antidote. As he is fond, you say, of his profession, excite in him emulation to excel, (which is easily done,) by stimulating him to exertion, and then heartily praising him for it. Give him all proper indulgencies, but of a totally different cast, if possible, from those he has lately been prone to, and thus try what Chalmers calls the "expulsive power of a new affection." You remember the coachman who said to the gentleman on the box, "Do you see that off leader there, sir?" "Yes, — what of him?" "He always shies, sir, when he comes to that 'ere gate. I must give him something to *think on*." No sooner said, than up went the whirling thong, and came down full of its sting on the skittish leader's haunches. He had "something else to think on," no time for panic or affected panic, and flew past the gate like lightning. If we can but give youth, in time, "something else to think on," we may keep out of their minds, by preoccupation, more evil than we can ever directly expel. One of the essential properties of *matter* may be said to be also one of the essential properties of *mind*, — impenetrability; it is as impossible that two thoughts can coexist in the same mind at the same time, as that two particles of matter can occupy the same space. I shall be anxious to hear again.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XIX.

TO CAPTAIN EVANS, IN INDIA.

PENTONVILLE, Wednesday, May 12, 1841.

MY DEAR EVANS,

.... So much for home gossip, of which Kate is so unconscionably greedy. Now for a question I wish you could get answered for me. I have heard, but can hardly believe it, that large quantities of your Indian gods are the genuine workmanship of our own Christian manufacturers — and that large “assortments” of these divine deformities are regularly made up for exportation. What a comment on idolatry! Gods made by the Infidel, and sold to the devout, for worship! But *we*, I think, are the worse of the two. We send out missionaries to reclaim the heathen from superstition, and then (that the missionaries, I presume, may never lack employment), we manufacture deities for the said heathen, of the most approved pattern and the very best materials. If there *are* “firms” that thus deal in bronze, — metallic and otherwise, — and drive a gainful trade in gods, one would like to have a peep at some of their invoices. How droll they would read! Fancy some of the items, or imagine advertisements running thus: “To the devout; a bargain! A miscellaneous assortment of gods of various sorts and sizes, — the lot to be disposed of cheap.” “A splendid Brahma, best bronze, warranted to stand all weathers.” “A Vishnoo, a little cracked in the head, and a flaw in the nose; a proportionate reduction made.” “A Seeva, gilt-lacquered, an extraordinary bargain.” “A lot of damaged gods, warranted none the worse for worship, at a very low figure. N. B. The above worthy of the attention of any one about to form his god-establishment, or fit for a present to a Temple or Pan-

theon." "Messrs. Mack and Co. agents for a renowned English god-manufacturer, being about to quit the god-business, beg to call the attention of their devoted customers to their unrivalled stock of Deities now selling off at extremely low prices." — Perhaps it would be wise for our god-manufacturing smiths to issue a catalogue and advertise thus: "Messrs. Smith and Co. by special permission god-makers to the Deities of India, beg to call the attention of the enlightened public of that religious country to their catalogue of spick-and-span new divinities of the most approved patterns and finished workmanship, at the extraordinarily low prices affixed. Messrs. S. and Co. venture to say that their gods will be found quite equal to any of the native manufacture, and fully as attentive to the prayers of their worshippers. Any gentleman or lady wishing to furnish a house with a proper assortment, will be met on the most liberal terms. Whole-sale god-buyers allowed a handsome discount."

It is hard to imagine that condition of the human intellect which can reconcile it to Idolatry as a : it is quite as hard to imagine how its votaries can accept gods manufactured by those who laugh at all such trumpery! The gods themselves, it seems, graciously favor "free trade," and insist on no monopoly for their worshippers. Not only their devotees, but their enemies, may create these accursed-making deities in all their perfections. But perhaps the thing hardest of all to conceive, is the moral condition not of the heathen; but of those so-called Christians who professing to laugh at and abhor all such idolatry, can pander to it for a little gain; and while praying each Sunday that God would be pleased to "confound all idols," can do their best to perpetuate them for a miserable 10 per cent.

But it is not a solitary blot on our superior civilization. A few missionaries go to teach Savages purity of morals,



and thousands of profligates go along with them, who by rapacity, cunning, and cruelty, shall make the white man stink in the nostrils of a whole archipelago, and do in a year what an age of missionary instruction and effort can hardly repair. Surely our boasted European civilization has been a strangely inconsistent thing: a "fountain" that sends forth "sweet waters and bitter." A solitary Howard, once in many ages, consecrated his life to the captive and the broken-hearted; and, contemporaneously, thousands of slave-traders bought and sold their living cargoes, at the price of sorrows millions of millions of times greater than ten thousand Howards ever soothed. A single Bartholomew Las Casas devotes himself to the championship of the poor Indians; and Cortez and Pizarro, and a score of rapacious adventurers more, teach them that superior science means only superior wickedness. We boast of carrying to the savage the arts of life, and too often destroy life itself by other arts. The early settlers of America, says Knickerbocker, taught the natives the use of many admirable medicines, and in order that they might not be blind to their obligations, nor think they had received things nothing worth, imported at the same time the diseases for which they had furnished the infallible specifics!

Sometimes, when I think of such things, I am almost ready to ask whether our civilization has hitherto been a curse or a blessing to the world at large. To suppose the former, however, would be a false conclusion, I have no doubt. But as to those who abuse it, like our god-makers, one would think they were a sort of Manichæans, and worshipped indifferently the good and evil principles, by turns now gave Ormuzd a lift, and now Arimanes.

Civilization is, doubtless, a good thing and tends to good; but not simply as civilization. It must be penetrated and animated by virtue and religion. It is a nonsensical notion

of many in the present day, that civilization, superior knowledge, and science, *must* do much, of themselves, to regenerate the world. Every day's experience in private life — where we so often see great knowledge wielded by as great wickedness, — and still more the page of history, ought to convince us that, like commerce, poetry, eloquence, the press, — Civilization (of which these indeed are but some of the forms) is in itself nearly indifferent to moral good and evil; more naturally (as every thing else worth having), the ally of goodness, provided something else first produces that goodness; but not necessarily. In itself it has no direct tendency to create virtue, and is as capable of being employed for the devil as for God.

You will say, perhaps, like an old Indian as you are, that in India, whatever injuries abused civilization may have caused, these have been largely overbalanced by the benefits of its legitimate influence, and in this I quite agree. Nay — in that country, even our worst oppressions have been tolerable, compared with those inflicted by the native governments. But, though I doubt not you can prove it quite a paradise, pray make haste and come home, and bring Kate with you. I wish you could have, for only six months, the latter *half* of the modest demand of that contented East Indian official who said that all he desired was summed up in the old English lamentation — “Alas and alack a-day!”

Yours ever,

My dear Evans,

R. B. H. G.

## LETTER XX.

TO ———

LONDON, Nov. 8, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I heartily congratulate you on the adjustment of your family differences. Jeremy Taylor says that the "returns of kindness are sweet," and never was a truer word. The sensations of "reconciliation" are indeed delicious; and it is well, perhaps, that people do not fully appreciate the luxury, or they would be ready to quarrel for the pleasure of—making it up again!

I hope that will not be the case between you and your long estranged brother. Pomponius Atticus says, in the funeral oration for his mother, that he had never been *reconciled* to her—never having quarrelled with her all his days; may you and your brother, in that sense, die "unreconciled,"—never having quarrelled again!

I can imagine the expansion of heart with which you met after so long an alienation. I dare say each of you protested, in exuberance of candor, (as is customary on such occasions,) that *he* alone was to blame, and that the other had been a paragon of all that was excellent and virtuous! I have been sometimes amused at the extreme reaction of humility and self oblivion which on these occasions is apt to transform our repentant selves into devils, and our opponents into angels. Heaven forgive us! I fear that Truth in these cases has to pardon something to charity. "I can't think," says one, "how I could be such a fool as to lose my temper, my dear friend," when perhaps he would have been an angel if he had kept it. "It was *my* fault—mine entirely," says the other, with as little regard to truth. "Nay, don't say so," says the first, bent on proving himself

a villain, and "refusing to be comforted," if you attempt to show that he is *not* one. In vain; each, in that mood of gushing tenderness, refuses to "extenuate aught" in himself, or to "set down aught" against the other "in malice."

I remember once seeing two friends so vehemently protesting, in the ardor of returning love after a bitter quarrel,—each that the other was not in the wrong, that I almost began to fear lest they should quarrel again because neither would believe the other to be such a rascal as each proclaimed himself!

Ah! well a-day! It is beautiful—it is comical; and for the rarity of the thing one may pardon it, since it is so seldom that in *this* way the heart gets the better of the head.

In other ways, heaven knows, it has more questionable advantages; in a thousand cases, it wheedles the poor head out of all its brains, as easily as a wife gets on the blind side of her husband.

I have often thought there is something very beautiful in the consolation which, in the moment of reconciliation, Joseph addresses to those rascallions, his brothers. "Now therefore," said he, "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." Kind heart! Apart from the fact that his soul "yearned over" his brothers, and that, therefore, he spoke as he felt, this would have been a most unconscionable apology for them.

'Oh, fie!' I imagine some austere infidel saying,—such a stickler for a precise morality, when he looks into the Bible, and so lax when he examines any other book,—“do not say a word in excuse; the prevarication of the Patriarch is quite awful. To think that he should thus have trifled with Truth, and ‘nail’t wi’ Scripture!’” But beg-

ging your pardon, dear Mr. Infidel, it was no trifling with truth at all. Poor Joseph *spoke* as he *felt*; it were well if you always did. Overwhelmed with adoration at the thought of the all-controlling Wisdom which had thus suddenly brought good out of evil, yearning with affection for his brethren, and feeling, to agony, *their* agony of shame and repentance,—he spoke out of the fulness of his heart, and I dare say, hardly “wist” what he said; as, indeed, is exquisitely indicated in that beautifully natural, yet utterly irrelevant question which precedes,—“Doth my father yet live?”—a fact of which he could have no doubts after his preceding interviews. And so, instead of an instance of lying, Mr. Infidel, you have what the Bible is everywhere presenting us with,—a profound trait and exact transcript of human nature.

I have read somewhere, (is it not in one of our *Essayists*?—the *Tattler* perhaps, but I am not sure,)—of one who was so delighted to bring about reconciliations, that he used to make no scruple of robbing Truth to enrich Charity. If he found two neighbors estranged, and, as usual, sulky, he would go to them separately, and expatiate with mendacious unction on all the kind things which each had said of the other; how profoundly each yearned for reconciliation, if he could but think the other would accept his advances! “I am so grieved,” he would say to one, “to hear that you and Mr. ——— have quarrelled. I should never have thought it to hear what he was saying of you the other day; what respect he felt for you, and how much he loved you!” “If I thought so ———,” of course would be the reply to this flattery; “I am sure it was a very foolish misunderstanding; I dare say it was more my own fault than his—I wish you would tell him so.” Back, of course, the loving liar goes to the first, and declares how much his enemy mourns over the quarrel, and what very

handsome things he has said. Their reconciliation, after such reciprocal compliments, becomes an easy task. Truly may it be said in this case that charity "never faileth."

Your little niece is quite well, and thanks you for the pretty book. She is now six, and often amuses me by her *naïve* remarks. I was endeavoring, the other day, like a wise moral instructor, to inculcate, from the sage cat who sat on a chair washing herself with utmost diligence, a lesson of cleanliness; not that Mary particularly needs it, but out of the superfluity of superior wisdom, anxious to employ any incident as a handle for a little moral prosing. "Look at the cat, Mary," said I; "see how diligent she is to make herself look clean and handsome this morning." But the little puss—the *human* puss, I mean—taught me that parabolical instruction sometimes halts, and that everything may be laid hold of by "two handles." "I don't think it is so very clean of her," said she—"to lick her own feet and then rub them over her face!"

She has already decided to her perfect satisfaction the subtle question of an immaterial principle in animals,—which has divided so many philosophers; for when I asked her whether the cat had a "soul," she replied with great gravity—"The cat has a *mind*, but she has not got a *soul*." So that, you see, she promises to be a great philosopher by the time she is out of her teens.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXI.

TO EDWIN GREYSON, ESQ.

PENTONVILLE, LONDON,

Friday, Feb. 11, 1842.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Enclosed, I send young Tom a few lines, as you wished. Be pleased to expand a little those last hints about the use of "Yes," and "No; —for, credit me, I fear the lad's gentleness of disposition and bashfulness of tongue more than anything else. Now these are in themselves, and rightly managed, admirable things; and it is dismal beyond expression that they should be used as "handles" whereby the devil may the better catch hold of the soul. It is to arrest a bird by his wings;—to imprison him by the very things that should enable him to soar upwards toward heaven.

The litigious gentleman you inquire after, has lost his cause, after a long trial. The costs are considerable. He will not carry the matter further. He is something like the Jew in the reign of King John, from whom that tyrant demanded ten thousand marks, and for refusing to pay, condemned him to lose a tooth a day till he complied. The usurer held out till he had lost seven teeth, and then gave in. As an old author remarks, if he had given in at once, he would have had his money bags empty, but his jaws full, and if he had persevered, he might have had his money bags full, though his jaws were empty. As it was, both jaws and money bags were empty alike. It is much the same with Mr. S——.

Ever your loving Brother,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXII.

TO T. GREYSON.

Feb. 11, 1842.

MY DEAR BOY,

You are now fifteen — have been inducted into a tail coat — and are about to “enter on life,” — as your father expresses it; and so he wants me to give you a little advice. He evidently feels in a great fright about you, — as most fathers do when their sons arrive at your age. And I fear I must add, that the generality of them seldom feel any fright *till* then. They seem to think that their lads, till they summon them into the counting-house, or determine on their profession, are exclusively the mother’s care; and provided she looks after them in childhood — keeps their pinafores clean — sends for the doctor if they are ailing — teaches them their catechism on Sunday, and despatches them with a correct inventory of their linen to school, the generality of fathers trouble themselves but little about the matter. When their son’s character is really *formed* to all intents and purposes — nay, often so *set* that nothing can alter it, then these wise fathers begin to think what they are to do towards forming it, and, for the first time in their life, awake to their responsibility.

But I find I am beginning to lecture fathers rather than children; and, to speak truth, I should be guilty of a double error if I were to go on in this strain; for your father is *not* one of these fathers, and if he were, it is you, not he, whom I am called upon to address.

Yes, my boy, he has done his duty, not less than your mother. Your nurture has been careful throughout. Still he is evidently in no little perturbation about you; not that he has observed anything wrong, or that gives him cause



to doubt you — he assures me of the contrary; but because he knows, my dear youth, what you know *not* — the dangers which meet every one who for the first time leaves the nest,—the father's eye, the mother's wing; because he knows all the perils of a flight into this wide bleak world —the hawks in the air and the nets and the gins on the earth.

Well, I can but repeat what you have already been taught, till experience give it a deeper meaning, and impresses it as no other teaching can,—that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and the “*love* of the Lord” is the consummation of it. And if you have but these, as taught and exemplified to us by that gracious Saviour who came to make known to us the Father, and to lead us to Him, you are safe enough. Let the love and the fear of God be as wings to your soul; and then, to recur to the image which I used just now, you are safe from each “snare of the fowler,” and from all the “powers of the air.” And remember where the secret of all spiritual force to cope with the world and its temptations lies;—“They that *wait* on the Lord shall renew their strength—mount up as on eagles' wings.” They shall dwell rather above the earth than upon it — alight rather than abide here — soar, when they please, into mid heaven, and at last take their flight into heaven itself.

How happy for you, if you early make choice of the “better part which will not be taken from you!” To think that at fifteen, you will have secured the felicity of two worlds. Yes,—the felicity even of this,—as to all that most essentially constitutes it; for “with a conscience void of offence towards God and man,” and in the hope of a better world when this has passed away, you will have *within*, however the tempest may bluster, and however dark may be the night, *without*, the elements of a perpetual content; you

will only have to step within yourself, to find the fire bright and the hearth swept, and all the peaceful enjoyments of an inviolable home.

On the other hand, — if you go wrong, it will be a tremendous aggravation of all your sorrows, that from childhood you knew the “better way,” and would not walk in it; that you set out with your face to the “heavenly city,” yet turned your back on its golden pinnacles, and marched obstinately into the land of shadows. The tears of repentance are ever bitter; — yours, if they ever come when an evil heart has perverted knowledge and seared conscience, will be tears of molten lead! But I will “hope better things” of you. May you never spend youth in that worst of speculations — laying up sorrows for age.

As to practical rules of life, in your intercourse with the world, you know, like all the rest of us, more than enough to keep you straight, if you do but practise them. But if I may venture to drop a hint or two, I should, from what I have perceived of a certain tendency to bashful irresolution, lecture you against that. Believe me, it is a most dangerous quality in youth, — for the devil is an impudent fellow, and he wins a thousand more by false shame than he does by finding them shameless. It has been said, and well said, that the great lesson to be taught youth is how to say “No;” it is equally important to know how to say, “Yes.” If when some tempter says of something he ridicules, but which you hold sacred or serious, — “Surely you do *not* believe in that nonsense,” — you have the boldness to say, “Yes, I do;” and if, when he says in the equally cajoling way, — “Come, you *will* go with us now, I know,” — you can answer firmly, “No,” when conscience bids; — in short, if you learn when and how to say “Yes” and “No,” you will not only have learned one of the most important lessons of life, but will have set up about you such a sturdy, prickly

quickset hedge against temptations that hardly one of the devil's imps will think it worth while to scratch himself by trying to scramble through.

Ever your affectionate uncle,

R. E. H. G.

### LETTER XXIII.

TO ALFERD WEST, ESQ.

WINDERMERE, June, 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It has been raining here at such a rate for the last four days, that if "Captain Noah," (as he is irreverently called in one of our old "Mysteries,") were on earth, he would certainly think it high time to set about the building of another ark.

Can you procure for me, at a moderate price, Heyne's Homer—the nine volumes, I mean? By the way, this seems an odd question after such an exordium. So I must just stop a minute to explain to you the connection between "Captain Noah" and Heyne's Homer; for though the connection may be obvious to you, it is just possible it may not.

I had put down my pen for a moment to contemplate the ceaseless down-pour with that despairing look which we generally cast to the heavens in such cases, when the rain itself, together with the mention of Noah, naturally led me back to the deluge—the deluge to the ark of that primeval navigator; and so just stepping in, to get out of the rain, I entered the cabin at that critical moment when Noah had opened the cabin window to leeward, and had the raven on his fist, preparing for his flight. The thought of the raven naturally led to the thought of the dove,—the dove to those far less fortunate "Columbæ" in Deucalion's deluge, whose nest, according to Horace, was so inconveniently vis-

ited by the fishes; this unaccountable freak of imagination entirely disorganized the whole train of my reverie, and sent me rambling among the Roman classics; the Roman classics, by what metaphysicians call either a suggestion of "resemblance," or a suggestion of "contrast,"—let the metaphysicians, and, in their default, the critics, decide which,—led me to the Greek classics; these to their Coryphæus, Homer, and to my long-coveted copy of Heyne. Procure it for me if you can, but let it be at a moderate price.

The above devious course of thought is about as tortuous as that which Hobbes mentions as a proof of the odd freaks of association. He says that in a company which was occupied in discussing the tragedy of Charles the First's execution, the good folks were startled by one of their number suddenly asking the value of a Roman denarius. It seems that, while they pursued their topic, this absent man had gone on a ramble of associations. The death of Charles had recalled the idea of the traitors who had a finger in it; the traitors, Judas Iscariot; Judas, the thirty pieces of silver; and that, the value of the coin denarius!

On all this I am induced to make the original remark, that the faculty of association is certainly a very strange one. Like everything else on earth, it has its two handles; its good and its bad sides; its uses and abuses. If it be itself the great auxiliary of memory, it as often puts to flight another ally of the same great faculty, attention; if it be able to intensify, often absolutely create, the beautiful, it can as suddenly destroy it by forcing on us some cruel *capriccio* of whimsical incongruity; if it can strengthen and fortify virtue, it can perform the same friendly office for vice; if it often suddenly hands us just what we want, or by an unexpected turn brings our wearied thoughts to their journey's end, it as often presents us with ten thousand things that

we want not, or sends us out on an idle tour over three-fourths of the universe.

The most casual mistake — the most innocent inadvertence — nay, even the most appropriate illustration — shall send half an orator's audience, especially if it be a *Christian congregation*, a million leagues from the subject of his discourse. I remember a preacher once innocently but irrelevantly indulging in some "illustrations" derived from "inductive and experimental philosophy." Those unlucky illustrations ruined the attention of as many hearers — to wit, of three friends and myself. The most amusing thing was to observe, that they had sent us all off by different routes of association — such is the activity of this versatile faculty. On comparing notes, we found one of us had no sooner heard the words, than he was transported in imagination to a lecture-room of the Royal Institution — peeped into two or three jars of chemicals — received a shock or two from a new galvanic apparatus, — saw two or three young gentlemen cut a caper under the influence of the nitrous oxide, — and could not get back till the preacher uttered the words "thirdly and lastly." The second instantly found himself deep in the first book of Bacon's "*Novum Organum*," and unconsciously illustrating the *idola tribus*. The third was sent instantly into the very midst of the mechanism of a new pump for which he was about to take out a patent, and got so entangled amongst levers, pistons, valves, and tubes, that he did not recover himself till the benediction. For myself, the mention of inductive philosophy sent me to Newton; Newton sent me on a long ramble through the planetary system — comets rushed by, and I went helter skelter on with them into the very thick of the fixed stars — the fixed stars led me up to heaven — heaven, by a very natural reaction, brought me back to my duties on earth; and I found myself in church at my devotions again, just as the preacher was

insisting on the duty of keeping our thoughts from wandering during religious service.

Perhaps there was not one of the audience an inch nearer heaven for the illustrations. "The preacher's 'experiment' was a failure," said one of my friends. "It was all naturally 'induced' by his 'inductions,'" said a second. "After all, what has Christianity to do with 'experimental philosophy?'" said the third. "Quite as much as we had," replied I, "or, for the matter of that, the preacher either."

But is it not mortifying to think that a chance word, a passing absurdity, a little inadvertence, may, like a pebble thrown among a flock of pigeons, send half the minds of the audience *whir* — *whirring* a thousand different ways? Surely the faculty of association is one that a public speaker ought to be well acquainted with.

I begin to think, from that last illustration, that Plato was right when he makes Socrates ludicrously compare the ideas in our minds to a flock of pigeons in a large pigeon-house; they certainly go flying about with similar volatility, are as easily startled, and as difficult to catch.

If anybody wants hay this year, he must, should this weather continue, "fish for it," as Horace Walpole said.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

WINDERMERE, June, 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

\* \* \* \* So much in answer to your queries. Forgive me that I did not reply yesterday; but just as I was going to begin, my lodgings were visited by two ladies to

solicit a subscription to some new "society" (or some "branch" of one) they are going to establish in this neighborhood for a local and, no doubt, very humane object, though it appeared to me no more deserving of a separate "organization" than a thousand and one others. Nay, I fancy the end would be answered a thousand times better if every man that really desires it, would use his private influence and example to aid it, instead of ostentatiously setting up an "organization" to work it out *secundum artem*. The waste of time and energy in canvassing and speechifying, in gadding, and talk, and gossip (to say nothing of the provocatives to vanity, etc.), occasioned by the needless multiplication of these modern modes of benevolence, is prodigious. A "society" against the formation of any *needless* societies would be an excellent thing, and would be sure to find me a subscriber. The principle of "Division of Labor," in these social forms, is run mad, and ought to be strait-waistcoated.

Of course, all large objects, which really require confederacy, must have such organizations; who doubts it? But they should be as few as possible; and confined to objects which are too vast and comprehensive to dispense with them. This would economize time, money, agency, everything. But we now see societies formed, not only for all great objects, but for the most trivial local ones; multiplied far beyond necessity, either by excessive subdivision of objects, or by want of consolidation when the objects are nearly identical; all the purposes in view might just as well be secured by half the number. It is quite humiliating to think of the loss of time and patience, of breath, money, and oratory that all this entails. No sooner does some benevolent crotchet enter the mind of some philanthropic gentleman or lady, straightway a "committee" must be formed, and meetings—weekly, monthly, and annual—

held ; the post actively plied ; placards and reports printed ; circulars issued ; and, in short, all the usual machinery set in motion — to the infinite plague of quiet souls like myself, and of multitudes who have much more important business to attend to, and cannot find time for it. Nor can it be concealed that the expense of these "organizations," if they multiply at the present rate, will, in due time, swallow up no small portion of the capital of benevolence. No wonder so many of these "societies" languish, and that their whole history is little but a continued series of "appeals."

Inspired by a noble ambition, I think also of starting my own little association. Pray let me have a "branch" in your part of the country. I am not yet decided as to its *object* — but no matter ; there is no lack of them, for any one of "the ill-flesh is heir to" may furnish a foundation. I think, however, the "wooden-legged" men have been strangely overlooked, and that I shall entitle my "organization," "The poor Wooden-legged Men's Friend's Society" (it is well to have a long name), for providing them with that supplementary limb *gratis*. I delight myself with thinking what an imposing appearance my array of "wooden legs" will make at my "annual meeting," and with what clatter of emphasis they will knock their applause at eloquent periods by means of the timber toe. An array of the "two wooden-legged" might, methinks, grace the front of the platform — seated on rather high chairs to exhibit to the audience, at a properly conspicuous angle, the good results of the "organization." N. B. Contributions received *either* in money or timber.

I please myself also with the droll specimens of philanthropy which (as is wont in other cases) will garnish my annual Report ; such as "an old bed-post" from one contributor, the proceeds of a "gold-headed cane" from another, or "six fathoms of well seasoned oak as a thank-



offering for the giver's needing none of it," from a third. However, do not think in such items I intend any satire on any genuine acts of philanthropy, however trivial: I am only laughing at the foolish vanity which too often leads men, instead of "giving with simplicity,"—as the Apostle so beautifully expresses it—to tempt the derision of the world by parading their benevolence in the odd forms in which it often greets us in print. . . .

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXV.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

GREAT BARR, STAFFORDSHIRE, Aug. 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am sorry to find that you are so troubled with indigestion, that even the slightest irregularity is punished. Well; you must comfort yourself with the thought that you are not likely to become a *gourmand*, and that you need take no "pledge" to preserve your temperance; though, as you have no temptations, that I know of, to be either glutton or drunkard, the security may seem to you rather superfluous. I met the other day with an epigram in the Greek anthology, to the effect, that it would be a good thing if the "headache came *before* the drinking-bout instead of *after* it." Here it is:

Εἰ τοῖς μεθυσκόμενοις ἐκάστης ἡμέρας  
 Ἄλγεῖν συνέβαινε τὴν κεφαλὴν πρὸ τοῦ πιεῖν,  
 Τὸν ἄκρατον ἡμῶν οὐδὲ εἰς ἔπινεν ἄν·  
 Νῦν δὲ πρότερόν γε τοῦ πόνου τὴν ἡδονὴν  
 Προλαμβάνοντες ὑστεροῦμεν τὰ γαδοῦ.

Certainly with even *less* than that we should find the morals of mankind wonderfully improved; I mean, if retri-

bution was but *simultaneous* with transgression;—if, for example, that thing we call "conscience" were attached to one of the vertebræ, at the same time that it warned us, began to tug away at some exquisitely sensitive nerve. What alderman would gloat on venison if, after having taken as much as was good for him, conscience, the moment he sent up his plate for a superfluous slice, admonished him of his folly by a sudden fit of the colic, instead of a sleepy, dozy intimation that ten or twenty years hence, if he lived so long, he would repent it; or if a liar, the moment his tongue began to wag, found his face blushing with St. Anthony's fire instead of the faint tints of shame; or if a thief detected the incipient feeling of covetousness by a desperate contemporaneous twinge of gout in his great toe; or if the hypocrite (as, according to Swedenborg's notion of "spiritual correspondencies," he is or ought to be) were told of his fault by a swinging paroxysm of toothache! . . .

The forms of nervous disease are endless, — the vagaries of hypochondriasis infinite. Let me give you a droll instance. I have a friend who exactly illustrates the beneficial effect of that constitution of "conscience" just spoken of. Except that he is odd and hypochondriacal, and *therefore* perfectly miserable, he is one of the most enviable men I know. He is eminently virtuous, temperate, gentle, compassionate, kind-hearted, with all his appetites singularly under control. I was complimenting him a little the other day on his happy temperament, when I observed an expression of nausea, as if he had taken a dose of tartar emetic. "My dear friend," said he, "I beg you will not give me pain; and, in order to avoid it" (dropping his voice to a mysterious whisper, and looking round to see that no one was within hearing), "Know that the virtue on which you compliment me is, between ourselves, nothing but selfishness; so never compliment me again, for it makes me

wretched. My conscience—a morbid one if you will—has, somehow, got *entangled* with my nervous system, and I cannot think an evil thought without torture. If I see the hungry, and feel disposed to pass them unrelieved, I seem immediately seized with pangs of hunger myself; I have no peace till I have satisfied my own stomach by filling those of other people, and may thus be said to feed myself by other people's mouths. In the same manner, if an emotion of covetousness obtrudes itself, I have an immediate sensation in my throat and chest just like that we feel when, in company, we have *bolted* a hot morsel, and sent it hissing down the throat, because we could neither put it out nor keep it in the mouth. If I have any feeling of disingenuousness, that moment my too physical conscience warns me by a film over my eyes; and if I were to tell a lie, I do believe she would strike me stone blind at once. If I feel any disposition to exceed the most moderate indulgence at table, I have a twinge in the great toe of the right foot, which would reconcile me to oatmeal porridge and pease-bannocks for a fortnight; and if I am tempted to *vanity*, as I was just now when you flattered me so agreeably, I feel qualms at the stomach as if I had taken an emetic. In short, between ourselves, my virtue, as you call it, is all mere deception,—disguised selfishness. I wonder whether any one has ever been similarly afflicted!

“Afflicted!” said I, laughing; “I wish all mankind were so afflicted. I wish your disease were contagious, and that you could infect the world; or bite us all round like a mad dog, and inflict on us a moral *hydro-phobia*!”

“Ah!” said he, with a melancholy air, “do not say so; I am perfectly miserable. For what can be more wretched than involuntary virtue?—to have seeming benevolence, and feel it is all selfishness? How I sigh,” he continued, whimsically, “for the power to do any one good thing

unconstrained!—and, alas! how shall I ever be sure that I am in a condition of confirmed virtue while necessity thus backs conscience!" Was he (for he was a very modest man) laughing at me all this time, and, as usual with such men, depreciating his own excellences, and guarding against unwelcome flatteries? Or was it really one of the infinite freaks which nerves out of tune will play a hypochondriacal patient?

Whether it were so or not, the last observation reconciled me to the ordinary condition of our probation. Yes, thought I, as I took my leave,—forcing my features, as well as I could, to sympathize with the expression of his lugubrious virtue,—it would be indeed sad, if we were never sure that we should act as we ought, when not under an impossibility of acting otherwise; and this consideration sufficiently vindicates our present condition of probation, if we are to be made really and indefectibly virtuous; self-poised by active vital forces from within, not kept upright by painful bands and ligatures; by right motives, not by material springs and pulleys; which last would reduce us to a sort of Punch-and-Judy automata of virtue.

Nevertheless, something may be learned from my friend's droll experiences. In a somewhat similar condition ought virtue to *end*, though not so to *begin*; in a sensitiveness to conscience as keen as sensation, but moral, not mechanical,—and the reward, not the foundation of virtue. Happy is it when the Christian has so long practised the precepts of his Master that he feels that the wants of others trouble him nearly as much as his own;—till he cannot help "weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice;"—"till he cannot say to the hungry and thirsty, the cold and naked, "Be ye warmed and filled," and do nothing more;—till, like my poor whimsical friend, he must eat by proxy, and fill as it were, his stomach by

other people's mouths! *Sensation* cannot form virtue, but virtue should lead to emotions almost as vivid without being as painful.

Query;—seriously and soberly, and without any talk of nervous necessitation,—how much of the virtue of the world is owing to similar non-virtuous motives? How often is that which *seems* benevolence, only a form of selfishness? “ALWAYS,” say some of our philosophers; “charitable folks are uneasy if they refrain, and so they gratify themselves by giving!” Delightful theory, Master Hobbes! Then this virtue is on a par with that of my good hypochondriac, whose modesty is kept alive by nausea, and whose compassion is generated by the colic! Perhaps it may be said, “Well; what is the difference to the world? Who can distinguish between the most refined selfishness and the most refined benevolence, since the former, if it really calculate its own interests, will produce just the same effects as the latter?” Exactly the same, I believe; so that a world of truly calculating Epicureans would do just the same things as a world of virtuous men. Yet somehow, dear Epicureans, we feel that two acts are *toto cælo* different when the *sources* of the said acts are different;—as different as the blush which is called up by modesty from that crubescence which is the effect of a blister.

I am afraid that all this excellent disquisition will hardly reconcile you to your dyspepsia. Wishing that you may soon be so rid of it that you need not doubt whether your abstinence be involuntary or your prudence compulsory, believe me,

Ever, my dear Friend,

Yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

LETTER XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

GREAT BARR, Sept. 1842.

MY DEAR WEST,

I trust we are at length coming to the end of that formidable "strike" among the colliers, which has kept this part of the country in such commotion during the past few weeks. Poor fellows! it makes one almost despair of ever rescuing them from the tyranny of their own follies. One would have thought that the experiments already made must have convinced them that "strikes," injurious to all, must be *chiefly* injurious to themselves; that it is just "cutting off the nose to be revenged on the face," as the proverb says. Here is a million or more of wages lost to themselves and their families; the little hoards which *ought* to have been a sacred deposit for old age or a day of adversity, exhausted; the community at large subjected to great loss and anxiety; the habits of thousands amongst the artisans themselves deeply, and in many cases incurably, injured; and nothing in the world to show for it, except a few weeks of frenzied excitement and ruinous idleness. The only people benefited are the keepers of beer-shops, and those fools or knaves (for one or other they must be) who seduce the poor creatures into the notion that "strikes" are wise things. As for the leaders, a "strike" is, of course, for a month or two, a fool's paradise; they spout and speechify — they form "committees" — they preside over them — they travel *gratis* — they assume state — they are agreeably inflated (even next door to bursting) with the fumes of conceit and self-importance. Really, when one considers how, on these occasions, the poor folks are led by the nose; how plain it is, that come what come will of

a strike, and be the provocation to it what it will, the laborers themselves must be the chief losers, and yet how slow they are to learn truth so obvious, it almost makes one despair. But you, I know, do not despair; neither in truth do I, though I have not the faith which some of our modern *savans* and reformers profess in that infallible “specific” — knowledge! “Knowledge is *power*” — they are eternally chanting. Why, aye; and so is ignorance,—as our strike-demagogues agreeably find; indeed, I fear, if we consult history, that we shall find, so far as mere *power* goes, that great events have depended for their possibility quite as much on the ignorance of men in general as on the knowledge of those who have practised upon it; not to say that half the great things men have accomplished would have been unattempted, if a happy ignorance had not shrouded, at the commencement, the tremendous obstacles to be encountered. “Naturalists have observed,” says South, “that blindness is a very great help and instigation to boldness. And amongst men, as ignorance is commonly said to be the mother of devotion, so in account of the birth and descent of confidence too . . . he who makes ignorance the mother of this also, reckons its pedigree by the surer side.”

Knowledge, I grant, is a more respectable source of power than ignorance; but still, whether it be a beneficial power depends on a variety of conditions with which it has no essential connection in the world. *Mere enlightenment* is as little capable of subduing a refractory will and selfish passions, as ignorance; and surely the history of the world,—of unscrupulous ambition and crooked policy,—suffice to show that intellect and knowledge are in themselves instruments merely, and are just as ready to serve wrong as right — villany as virtue. I should as little hope by mere knowledge to make a man act aright, as to get incendiary

"Hodge" (as some one has said), just as he is about to stick his torch into a wheat-stack, to forego his enlightened purpose by reading to him the treatise on "Heat" out of the Library of Useful Knowledge, and showing him that, by the laws of the communication of "caloric," the said wheat-stack would first "expand" and then inconveniently "contract" under the action of that mysterious element.

Mere "political" knowledge, however sound, will effect the object just as little. Indeed, Hodge, ignorant as he may be, has quite light enough, before kindling his conflagration, to see by. What is wanted is a *training* that shall operate on *habit*; a *training*, religious and moral as well as intellectual; that alone will do the business.

If it be said that the *schooling*, by which knowledge is imparted, will do good,—that I admit most willingly; any decently managed school is, in that point of view, beyond all price; but then, though the giving of the *knowledge* is the avowed object, the great benefit reaped is a moral one; it is the effect produced in the very process itself of acquisition that constitutes the chief value of schooling; it is because industry, perseverance, patience, punctuality, veracity, honesty, and so on, are practically taught in the course of this school discipline; it is because it involves the right employment of time, and the exclusion of temptation.

When right *habits*, indeed, have been formed, then the knowledge imparted during their formation becomes invaluable, and an instrument fit to be profitably used; but, in itself, it is as liable to moral abuse as ignorance. If (to use a Socratic figure) you could *pour* all this knowledge into a lad's mind "as from a vessel," at once, and without the *moral* process of schooling, it would as little follow that it would be rightly used, or prove beneficial (though a "pow-



er" it would be), as the gifts of genius, which, we know familiarly enough, are no infallible passport to virtue. It is just the same with mere knowledge. Neither capacity nor knowledge have, in themselves, any reference to virtue, any more than anything else that is merely instrumental, and that may be, like these, used or abused.

In the meantime, it is hard to say how long it will be before our artisans and mechanics will learn practical wisdom, since experience itself has so often failed to teach it. I fear that thousands of families, in the present case, will find the table of "Dry Measure" in Bonnycastle utterly wrong, and that a "strike" is anything but equal to "two bushels," while, not "twenty strikes," but "one," will prove a "load" of intolerable misery ! . . . . .

Ever yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXVII.

TO THE SAME.

LEICESTER, Dec. 19, 1842.

MY DEAR WEST,

I met last night, at the house of a friend in this place, one who knew the celebrated Robert Hall. Among other things, he told me he had heard that, when a student at Bristol, Robert had been brought before the College authorities for being present at a prize-fight ! He defended himself half in jest and half in earnest, and to the great horror of the square-toes, confessed the fact, but denied any fault ; on the contrary, contended that a prize-fight was a very instructive sight for a youth to witness ! One can imagine the consternation of the seniors, while perhaps the young scapegrace insisted that it was a fine exhibition

of vigilance, patience, and fortitude; *as* such, eminently desirable for a Christian, and most desirable of all for a Christian minister to gaze upon; that Paul himself had evidently been at many a prize-fight, as shown by his fondness for the imagery derived from it; that it was *also* a most melancholy exhibition of human depravity and corruption, and therefore full of solemn and tender suggestions to one whose business it would be to rebuke and correct iniquity; and in short (for Robert was not the lad in those days to halt at a half paradox), that it was a singularly instructive and monitory spectacle for young ministers of the Gospel!

There is certainly something very attractive in a fight of any kind, let us say what we will. It was only the other day that I felt this (shall I confess it?), when I saw two little imps pitching into one another with much good-will — that is, ill-will — in the street. Out of regard for the public peace, or to prevent some member of the “Peace Society,” should any such one come along, from knocking their heads together by way of teaching them to abstain from all violence, I magnanimously “struck up” their swords — I mean, their fists — with my umbrella, looked awful, and said solemnly, “Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one another?” Yet, methinks, I *could* have stayed and seen a round or two with much comfort and edification. “After all,” thought I, as I went along somewhat uplifted and vainglorious, “how do I know that I have not impeded justice, and given indemnity to the wrong doer? How do I know that I have saved weak innocence from tyrannous strength? Nay, how do I know, (on which ever side lay justice or injustice,) I have really done anything?” And this last, probably, was the correct view; for, as soon as my back was turned, the great suit most likely proceeded to its ordinary arbitration, as if no such potent mediator had

appeared. It was just like many, more important, actions; whether our interference does good or harm, we know not; or, for the matter of that, whether it has any effect at all.

You remember the feeling, I dare say, with which, at school, the symptoms of a "fight" were hailed. "A ring, a ring," shouted the amiable bystanders, ignorant of the cause of the quarrel, and afraid only of its being too early accommodated. Certainly the love of a contest, of seeing energy and passion exhibited, must be strong in our pugnacious race; for whether it be a fight between a matador and his brute antagonist, or of two knights at a tourney, or an intellectual combat between acute and accomplished minds, it seems to be witnessed with much the same eagerness by the spectators as the fights of our school-days by us. Too often men feel as little regard to the justice of the cause as we did, when we watched, perhaps fomented, the first happy symptoms of a quarrel; trembling lest a little reasonable diplomacy should rob us of our treat! In that case we felt as much defrauded as the servant girl whose mistress had given her a *holiday*—to see an execution. She came back in tears, and her mistress was needlessly afraid that the sorrows of the spectacle had been too much for her sympathetic nerves. The lady was never more mistaken. "Oh, ma'am," sobbed the girl, "the man was not hung after all!"

What would you not have given to see the young scapegraces of Athens who assembled round Socrates, and listened to his disputes with the Sophist tribe? It would have been almost as interesting to watch their countenances as those of the chief combatants. How few amongst them should we have found fairly and ingenuously awaiting the issue of the investigation! How few cared an obolus about the truth! How few were willing to adopt

the practical teaching of the great sage they admired! Yet who can question that the delight with which these subtle youths watched the process by which the redoubted athlete of logic cast to the ground his antagonists, was most intense? Just as intense, I dare say, as that with which many of the hearers of the eloquent preacher with whom I began, listened to his fervid inculcation of the sublimest truths—and then forgot to practise them! . . .

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G

## LETTER XXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

TUESDAY, June 10, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The “suspicions,” you say, of your friend were unjust and hard to bear. Yes; unjust suspicion is always the very hardest thing to bear,—except, indeed, *just* suspicion. Do we want proof? Why, look at Job. There we see a submission, equally magnanimous and sweet, till his friends came to “comfort him.” What, by the bye, must be the condition of a man, when his greatest plagues are his “consolations?”

Thus was it with the Patriarch. His wife was bad enough, no doubt; and truly politic was the astute malignity of Satan in letting her remain, whatever else he took away; according to Coleridge’s epigram:—

“He took his honors, took his wealth,  
He took his children, took his health,  
His camels, horses, asses, cows,—  
And the sly devil did not take his spouse.”

But his *wife* was nothing to his *friends*. She was a blasphemous idiot — unless the translators have done her injustice; and Job gets rid of her, as the Antiquary might have done, by telling her she spake as one of the “foolish woman-kind.” But only think of the greater folly of the three philosophic “Consolers,” — who came to see their friend in the extremity of his desolation, and had nothing better to tell him than that they were very sorry to find him a great reprobate; hoped that, instead of offensive protestations of innocence, he would make a clean breast of it, and gratify them by telling them what a hoary old hypocrite he had been! It is a thousand pities that they broke their long silence of “seven days;” — they would have done much better in their character of *mutes*, and might have thus played their parts as decently as our modern friends of the same name, in other funereal scenes.

It is true that Job spake many things “unadvisedly with his lips!” but how can we wonder at it, goaded on by such peculiar “consolations?”

It would evidently have been better for Job, if he had said at once, “Not at home,” on his dunghill, to these “comfortable gentlemen.” It is observable that his tone was altered immediately after their appearance. When he spoke, even before they had spoken to him, he seems a changed man. He did not open his mouth to curse his day and to give expression to all those bitter, yet sublime and pathetic lamentations that he “had ever seen the light,” till he saw these curious sympathizers before him. I sometimes think there must have been something in their very presence that galled him; that they gazed at him, perhaps even before they spoke, with severe and sanctimonious looks which betrayed unuttered suspicions, or assumed a little of that pompous air with which complacent prosperity is apt to regard humiliation and misery. There is something very

sweet in the reproof given to these unfriendly friends in the "*denouement*" of the scene. It has always appeared to me as if, in entirely passing by Job's unquestionable folly in some of his passionate utterances, the Divine Benignity made *allowance* for those harsh speeches as extorted from him in the anguish of his soul under the pressure of his calamities, the most bitter of which was his friends' condolence. It is as though God looked on these as involuntary, torn from him under a condition in which moral self-control was lost in physical and mental agony; and so, thinking only of the substantial truth of Job's declarations of rectitude, and of the more enlarged views which, on the whole, he took of the divine administration, his condescending Maker refuses to take notice of these *escapades* of His afflicted child, — while He visits with severe rebuke the conduct of Bildad the Shuhite and his two amiable auxiliaries; because, while uttering many "wise saws" and solemn truisms, they had indulged in such uncharitable suspicions, and had been so utterly careless about the anguish they were causing. He was "angry" that they had not spoken the thing that was right, "as His servant Job;" and they were to go to His "servant Job" to be prayed for, and eat humble pie, and a good large slice of it too (I should like to have seen their faces while they were munching it), else their leisurely and inhuman philosophy would have got them into a scrape.

By the bye, is there not exquisite nature in the gradual way in which the "wordy strife," once begun, goes on increasing in harshness and uncharitableness? The "friends" at first express their suspicions with circumlocution and polite ambiguity, and the "ifs" — which however, are no "peacemakers" — are abundant. But as the controversy proceeds, they become as thoughtless of Job's feelings and of the pangs they cause, as a Majendie in dissecting a live

jackass ! There is human nature for you ! Once get angry for an hypothesis, even though an ethical one, and our ethical philosopher will trample charity, pity, truth itself, and every cardinal virtue under heaven in the mire, sooner than surrender a tatter of it.

The pathos of that bitter cry, — “Have pity on me, oh, my friends! have pity on me, for the hand of God hath touched me,” — extorts nothing from the “Consolations of Philosophy” on this occasion. Eliphaz the Temanite is prompt to “answer the multitude of words” with a greater multitude; and, “full of talk” himself, asks whether “a man full of talk is to be justified?” Zophar the Naamathite has heard the “copy of his reproach,” and hastens to show that he is not going to stand *that*; while Bildad the Shuhite wants to know, in a prolix speech, how long it will be before Job “makes an end of words?” One and all hasten to enter their protest against Job’s reasonings, and vindicate their system of dogmatic theology; bring him in guilty of “uttering lies,” “mocking God,” “casting off fear,” “restraining prayer;” of a “crafty tongue,” and the “hope of the hypocrite!” No wonder at last, after Job’s final and most sublime self-vindication, that he intrenches himself in that indignant silence which is yet more touching than his pathos, — and exclaims, “The words of Job are ended.” It is a great wonder to me that the good man did not fairly succumb under the weight of his friends’ sympathy and consolation.

From this unlucky experiment, I think we may infer that when we see any man in trouble, and have nothing better to say to him than that he is probably scourged for sins of which we know nothing, we had better hold our tongues; but, at all events, let us not wonder that such suspicions embitter the spirit of man far more than the troubles themselves.

By the way, — and quite apart from this particular and unexampled case of condolence, I should say that it is better, at least in great trouble, to be at first *without human sympathy* altogether. A man in his senses, left alone with God and himself, manages, I sometimes think, better than with a host of merely mortal “Consolateurs.” In the presence of the Infinite, — like Job before those accursed tongues began to wag, — we fall down prostrate, and hush the heart in silence. But if we begin to talk much with others, or they with us, — beshrew that confounded tongue (theirs and ours) ! — it somehow reacts on the heart and the understanding, and produces disquiet. Like the clang of a trumpet, it excites emotions that, but for it, might have slumbered. Sometimes, too, the platitudes which a mind at ease utters to a mind in anguish (however true they may be), and the provoking tranquillity with which they are doled out, chafe and irritate us. Sometimes we are told we grieve *too much*, and sometimes not in the *right* way ; sometimes a consolation is hinted which is felt to be none ; sometimes we are told to be cheerful, when we feel we can’t ; and more frequently than all, and perhaps worse than all, comes a bit of mortal moral “prosing,” which has been anticipated by our own mind a thousand times, and the repetition of which only tends to make us impatient. Perhaps I am peculiarly sensitive in this matter ; but I confess I have never been *in profundis* (and I have several times been so) without wishing every friend that came to see me, at Jericho.

I remember, in one of the most sorrowful hours of my life, meeting by chance with a relation who had suffered a like calamity. I had not seen her for years ; I have never seen her since ; I can never see her again, at least in this world. We met, clasped hands, looked into each other’s eyes, — read, reciprocally, the whole tale of each other’s sorrows there, — exchanged all unutterable thoughts, —



and, without speaking one word, passed on. I will venture to say we said more, and more to the purpose too, than if we had been exchanging common-places of condolence from that day to this.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXIX.

TO THE SAME.

GREAT BARR, Aug. 1843.

MY DEAR WEST,

I am not ashamed to say that, after you left me, I felt very much like a fish out of water, if indeed you know how that feels. I could settle to nothing. My books seemed uninteresting, — the garden walk, we had so often paced of late, intolerably lonesome, — the silent piano a positively disagreeable object. The sun shines as bright over the green fields and hills as when we rambled and talked so merrily there yesterday, and yet it seems to shine with a sombre and melancholy light. Certainly those of us who live almost absolutely in solitude are much to be pitied when we have parted with a friend; for, if the pleasure of seeing him is keen in proportion to the rarity of the enjoyment, the separation is felt with a far more exquisite sensibility than can ever be experienced by those to whom each day brings a new guest, and whose memories, like the waxen tablet of the ancients, are ready each moment to receive a new impression.

These partings, — when will they cease? or cease to be regretted because they can be at pleasure eternally renewed? But in this world, and at our age, I cannot help thinking, whenever we part, of what Cowper says so pathet-

ically, that "the robin red-breast may be chirping on the grave of one of us before the winter is over." I sometimes envy the patriarchs their longevity, who could, without absurdity, invite a friend to pay a visit, "if all be well," half a century, or, for the matter of that, two centuries hence, and at sixty bespeak the honor and pleasure, "if nothing happened," of your company at their three hundred and fiftieth birthday! — at all events, when they did meet, could speak not only of an ancient friendship of thirty or forty years, as we poor ephemerals so complacently do, but of one of five or six centuries! Terribly long-winded, though, depend upon it, must have been some of those stories which the old gentlemen told over a winter fire; I imagine Methuselah's youngest son, a stripling of eighty or so, must often have anticipated the maxim of Montaigne, "*Les vieillards sont dangereux.*" No doubt, he often quietly slipped out of the room just as the patriarch began that desperately tough affair of his "first love," when he was a gay youth of just one hundred. Cannot you imagine the ancient, surrounded with his great-great-great-great-grandchildren, to the seventh or eighth generation, in a small family party of seven hundred and forty-five,—all assembled to celebrate his eight hundred and fifty-first birthday? What prodigious lapses of time, methinks, would the old gentleman be apt to deal with;—how he remembered something four hundred and fifty years ago, "come next fall," as well as if it happened "yesterday;" how he remembered it very well, because his eldest daughter's great-grandchild's fifth daughter's son's nephew was then a little lad of forty years of age, and died of the measles!

Yet, on second thoughts, it seems irreverent thus to talk of the imagined prosiness of him on whose silver hairs we should have looked as on the snowy summit of Mont Blanc; whose eyes had gazed on those of Adam; who could tell

us traditions of the young beauty of Eve, and carry us back to memories of the world's dawn!

But would even patriarchal longevity suffice us? I trow not. Even *that* must come to an end; and if we were to live not only as long as Methuselah, but as long as Voltaire's little man of Saturn, whose term was 30,000 years, or even as "Micromegas" himself, we should still say, "This, you see, is just to be admitted to a glimpse of the world; we are doomed to die, as one may say, the moment we are born." No question but Methuselah himself often read sage lessons in his nine hundredth year on the extreme brevity and vanity of human life, and told his descendants, when near a thousand, that his days were but "as a shadow," and "as a dream in the night." What then the remedy? Ah! my friend, how these partings make one long for that immortality in which there shall be none, or none that shall be attended with regrets; because we shall be assured that after a little interval—yes, for even if separation be for a thousand years, it will be little in comparison with eternal duration—we shall meet in joy again, and friendship know no death. Strange, glorious issue of things! when friends shall bid each other farewell, even for five hundred years, with an unmoistened eye: set out, on a little tour of some small portion of the universe (to visit Cassiopea, for example, or Orion, for two or three centuries,) and come back, still to find the charmed home-circle unbroken, the "immortal amaranth" still mantling the porch with its unfading leaf, and gardens ever verdant, because there "eternal summer dwells."

Mystery of mysteries! that human folly should ever forego these enchanting hopes, and count itself "unworthy of eternal life:" still greater mystery, that sin should ever induce us to do anything to forfeit them! Yet, in truth, the latter mystery will enable us to comprehend the former; for

the fact that man is such a fool as to imperil immortal delight for momentary gratifications, too well explains his apathy. Apart from the consciousness of demerit, there is not a human being who would not, amidst the sorrows and separations of this world, sooner part with anything than the hopes—even though they be faint—of immortality. Let a future life be only matter of guesses and conjectures, yet, if man thought that the sole alternatives it presented were Nothing or “eternal happiness,” you would see all mankind true to the principles on which they generally act, and believing as *the will directed them*. Yes, ready to knock anybody on the head who but whispered a doubt of that fair reversion which man’s hopes would soon teach him to convert into certainty.

Strange that any one for the sake of a little gain, or a profitable lie, or the momentary gratification of any passion or appetite whatever, should do anything to cloud such bright hopes, which surely, even if delusive, are, so long as they are believed, by far the most solid and precious of all our pleasures! May you and I, my friend, seek, in the only right way, the realization of these hopes, and every day earnestly strive to render ourselves less strange to the scenes which await us, by foregoing every appetite and passion which is inconsistent with them. We shall then at length greet each other, I doubt not, in that world where we shall either part no more, or part and meet, and meet and part without end;—meet with ever fresh delight, and part without fear or sorrow; where “farewell”—no empty wish—will always fulfil itself, and “welcome” will be repeated for ever.

Yours ever,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXX.

TO A FRIEND WHO HAD NARROWLY ESCAPED SPENDING A  
NIGHT IN ST. ALBAN'S ABBEY.\*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Far from laughing at you for that pit-a-pat at the heart as you saw the gleam of sunlight lessening in the great western door of the Abbey, and thought you were in for an autumnal night in the dreary pile, (standing so isolated, that by no possibility could you have made your voice heard,) I assure you, I quite felt for you, and was conscious of a *sympathetic* pit-a-pat even at your description.

I think I have as much physical courage as most men, and perhaps more than the average moral courage; and yet I am so persuaded that mere courage, physical or moral, is impotent against the *cumulative* effects of imagination when that faculty is subjected to the continuous pressure of influences favorable to its unchecked activity, that I would not answer for myself, or for any man in the circumstances in which you seemed likely to be placed.

In truth, let the imagination be ever so feeble, let it be with or without culture, still I believe fully that its latent energies *may*, under the operation of novel, impressive, and sufficiently persistent influences, be roused into such intense action, as to overmaster every other faculty; subdue not only reason and judgment by ideal terrors, but impose laws on sensation itself; make the eyes see, and the ears hear, just what it pleases.

I dare say you may recollect reading of sentinels during

\* Finding the door open, he had wandered in one autumn afternoon, and, lost in thought, was musing in the ancient pile, when he heard steps near the distant door. He turned, and had just time to call to the vanishing figures. A minute later, and he would have been shut in all night.

the Peninsular War, who, having been stationed on the outskirts of the field after a day's skirmish, have been known to desert in the night, not from fear of living enemies, but from inability to endure the proximity of the dead! There lay the foe in the dread silence of his last sleep, and put his living foe to flight! I can easily imagine such a thing happening even to a brave man.

I remember, when a lad of sixteen, it used to be sometimes my lot to pass a remarkably dreary and isolated churchyard about a mile distant from a very ancient country town. Like some other ancient towns, it has gradually shifted its site and left its churchyard behind it, as if the dead and the living had quarrelled;—no bad separation, by the way. If I were writing now to our worthy friend, the Rector of——, I would maliciously suggest whether it might not be from antipathy to “sermons” that we thus find old towns sometimes hitching away from the church!

At that time of life, an imputation of *fear* was my *greatest* fear. So feeling ashamed of a certain uneasy consciousness of gladness when my horse had fairly turned the corner of the road which led into the churchyard, I resolved, one wild-looking, stormy November evening, to face and conquer this indefinite dread. I tied my horse to the gate which led into the charmed ground, and determined to walk fairly round it. I did so,—and I need hardly say saw nothing; yet I will own to you that before I had made the circuit, the senses were sufficiently quickened to convince me that it only required sufficient time to make me see and hear any thing that imagination should choose to palm upon me. The melancholy autumn wind sighed and moaned with peculiar solemnity among the branches of the dark trees which edged the wall of the churchyard; and as it rustled in the long grass of the

graves over which I stumbled, and made the sear leaves patter on the grave-stones, I could almost fancy I heard the feet of supernatural visitants; the shimmering of a white tomb seen in the distant gloom looked like a "sheeted ghost;" and as I was just getting round to the point which led straight to the churchyard gate, all at once, and without any reason or warning, I had a sort of vision, as my eyes rested on a large tomb, of a figure lifting its arm with a menacing gesture. It was, I doubt not, the fancy-transformed shape of some monumental sculpture; but it came with such startling suddenness that it left me without power of reasoning upon it. I made a strong effort to walk straight on, though quickening my pace, and was glad enough, I am not ashamed to say, to regain my horse's back, — who, happily proof against all imagination, was quietly munching his grass, and, I dare say, wondering in his mind at the unreasonable hour I had chosen for my devotions!

I once had a friend who lost his way on one of the mountains of Cumberland one autumn evening; and fearful of walking down some precipice, and equally afraid of going to sleep, he paced out a little walk, before it became quite dark, and resolved to keep in motion to and fro on that sentinel's beat all night. He told me that as he looked at the giant peaks and the shadowy glens by the light of a waning moon, and listened to the distant roar of waters in the still and solemn night, his imagination possessed and terrified him almost to madness; and I can well believe it.

Had you been caught, I can easily suppose that you might have been fairly over-mastered before morning, and come out an — idiot! You would have had an endless variety and succession of sights and sounds wherewith fancy might play you tricks, — making you at last see

what is invisible, and hear what is inaudible. No doubt you would have spent the hour of fading twilight in pacing up and down the echoing aisles, trying to persuade yourself of the folly of ideal terrors, and that, beyond the absurdity and inconvenience of your situation, there was really nothing to disturb you. But, as you felt chilly with the night wind, and weary and faint with fasting (for an empty stomach has a good deal to do with a haunted brain, yea, a glass of warm negus has a mighty power of laying ghosts), imagination would begin to plague you; and the very echo of your footsteps, as you trod the resounding pavement, would seem to suggest sounds whispering in the roof. A sudden gleam of moonlight, as it broke through a cloud and chased a shadow near some distant pillar, would seem to show your startled eye that some living shape had glided behind the column; or as it brought out into shimmering light a distant monumental figure, would animate the marble with fancied life and motion. The very look of that low black door in the spacious north transept, seen in such vivid contrast with the white walls and columns, and leading down (so tradition says) to the tombs of the old abbots—would, if I am not mistaken, almost seem to you, as you passed it at a distance, half open; nay, do you not hear some strange sounds within it? There are also, you feel confident, mutterings and whisperings in the long cloistered walk over head among the second tiers of pillars. Hark! what was that sound? Pshaw! it is but a distant turret door slamming to with the night wind. You are but just convinced of it, when a rustling sound behind you seems to show that footsteps are pattering near. No, it is but the swaying of the branches of the old yew-tree against a distant window. Another burst of moonlight suddenly calls out of darkness a grotesque and grinning monster near



you. Look again; pish! it is but a fantastic ornament of tomb or pillar. All at once, the sharp shrill scream of the owlet startles the ear of night; — how deep, how appalling, is the silence that follows! Suddenly there is again a sound behind you, and, as you turn, a flickering shadow is seen; it is certainly some one disappearing behind that pillar. One — two — the clock tolls midnight; its vibrations are painfully distinct to the ear . . . and you think there are six long hours of darkness still before you!

In short, my friend, I am very glad you were not called to face this nocturnal adventure, for I fear that long before you had *pished* and *pshaiced*, and *pooh-poohed* away the sights and sounds which haunted you, imagination might so have transformed and misinterpreted them, as to make a fool of reason.

Did you ever stand and watch the dead, alone and steadily for some time — especially by candle-light? I have, and without a particle of fear; but as I have continued to gaze, I have seen how easily imagination might be deceived. I could sometimes almost have sworn that I had seen a slight movement of the heavy eyelashes, or a very slow rising and falling of the shroud, as of a perfectly noiseless breathing!

How exquisitely does Walter Scott depict the effect on the rude Deloraine, as he takes the “mighty book” from the Wizard’s “dead hand,” in Melrose Abbey! The flickering light on the face of death will often give just the appearance of that “dread frown.”

“Then Deloraine in terror took  
From the dead hand the mighty book,  
With iron clapsed, and with iron bound  
He thought as he took it, the dead man frowned.  
But the glare of the sepulchral light,  
Perchance had dazzled the warrior’s sight.”

No doubt habit will reconcile us to any thing: and people would, in a little while, sleep as sound in a chamber-house or in your abbey, as anywhere else. But place them in totally novel circumstances, and the old susceptibilities revive, and imagination asserts its supremacy again.

It is well no doubt to be freed from all superstitious fears: but the universal tendency of the human mind to people, with ideal images, solitudes and horrors, and the abodes of the dead—a tendency which assumes in general so intense a form in that hour when men stray near the “land of shadows”—does it not seem to indicate my friend that there are faculties in our nature which prophesy, *posterior* to a *gross* world, say—*perhaps* give us an “*inkling*” of the supernatural? Do not our susceptibilities, which are so easily awakened in various every bosom, afford a presumption that we are in affinity with another world and continually stand on the frontier of it? I know that this *alone* would be an *inadequate* argument for such a conclusion: but supposing it borne out by other and more tangible evidence, is not the sensitiveness of the imagination to all the circumstances which exclude us from the world and seem to bring us in face to the confines of the world of spirits a harmony with this solemn conclusion?

I know that it is the custom of many philosophers not only to laugh at such notions—when it is very proper—but to laugh *at* the *human* tendency, and *not* at the *all-wise* disposition:—even the philosophizing humors of a dying hour. But whether they be philosophers or not is another question.

They should know that we are not *other* beings, or *ideal* beings, *in* the *whole* collection of the *universe*—and it is *impossible* and *absurd* and *inconceivable* to think of

be dreaded as night and silence. Other men, so far as they lay any stress on this sensitiveness of imagination at all, would argue that it rather indicates that there are unseen realities than that there are *none*, though, no doubt, it often befools itself; just as shadows indicate a substance, or as dreams are the counterpart of realities.

One thing, at all events, both of us know well enough; that many who are most contemptuously incredulous in all such matters prove the greatest cowards when the trial comes. Abundance of examples show that those who have gathered courage from the illusory character of superstitious fears to proclaim, while in health and strength, the equally illusory character of the terrors of death itself, are apt at last to prove arrant cravens. This so frequent failure of courage ought to make these Bardolphs and Bobadillas of the devil a little more modest;—they should not, for very shame, boast and swagger over their cups, in high blood and in broad daylight, since, like so many of their fellows, they may be found showing the “white feather” when the inevitable hour, which can alone test their courage, comes.

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXXI.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

JANUARY, 1844.

MY DEAR WEST,

So J. S.— is unmasked at last. Upon my honor I almost pity him;—not for being unmasked, for on that he ought rather to be congratulated, since it has at least put a term to a course of what must have been unparalleled

self-torture, and was a necessary condition of even a chance of reformation; but I almost pity him to think of the frightful suffering he must have imposed on himself in wearing so long that close vizard, which must, one would think, have almost suffocated him. How much more hard, if the hypocrite did but know it, to *seem* than to *be* virtuous!

As to your question, "what punishment would be appropriate for hypocrisy,"—it is hard to say; I only know that as few can be too severe for it, so few can be more so than that which its eternal arts against detection, its shifts and self-constraint, must inflict on itself. I only know of one thing that could make it much worse; and that would be (if we had the power to manage it), to compel hypocrisy to act the hypocrite *perfectly*; that is, not only to give smiles, gestures, words, or tears, in homage to religion and virtue, but *acts*—though still reluctant acts; *practical* hypocrisy, in short, in which virtue should be exactly simulated, and have nothing wanting in the world, except that trifling thing—its essence. Only think of the rueful acquiescence with which a *benevolent* hypocrite would back his bland sympathy with distress and misfortune—by a constrained donation of a guinea;—the too sincere groans and grimaces with which a hypocrite in religion would perform the secret devotions to which he felt himself internally driven by an irresistible impulse, without meaning a word of the long prayers he uttered; the vexation with which he would find that sleep fled his eyelids till he had punctually performed his two hours of evening meditation and devotion (a genuine penance surely), for which he was taking credit of the world! How pleasant for the sentimental philanthropist to find himself, perforce, whispering consolation at the bedside of the sick and dying, and adored as a Howard without a particle of claim to it!

the "gay Lothario," sore against his will, compelled to make good that "promise of marriage" under which he intended to betray! the concealed toper always finding his secret flagon filled with delightfully transparent and insipid water! the disguised rake, playing airs of chastity so well, as to frighten every lady of his acquaintance at his austerity, and the masked wanton enacting the prude so inimitably as to prevent every eye from regarding her in any other light than as an angel who had mistaken her way and stepped into a body by mistake! Here, you see, we should have every virtue under heaven and not one particle of it; all its good effects though itself non-existent! You will agree with me, I think, that it would be an intolerable punishment thus to "do the works of God" and be the "servant of the devil," — to take more pains to go to hell than other people to go to heaven. No doubt; but then the prescribed actions are precisely what such people pretend to be doing, and I would merely turn the pretence into reality.

But how, by the way, shall we deal with that curious class of hypocrites who affect failings which they have not; who acknowledge "sins" of which they were never guilty, for the sake of being reputed saints among those who make a merit of "voluntary humility;" or who parade vices to which they are strangers for the sake of being thought men of *ton* and spirit? To punish *these* by compelling them to act the vices they dissemble would, I fear, be no punishment at all: the "saint" would soon *qualify* himself thus to be a "sinner;" and the rake do his best, at all events, to justify his boast of profligacy. It is hard to say how these are to be treated on any such plan. Perhaps the best way would be to get the world to resolve, that when the things hypocritically assumed are considered discreditable in themselves, those who assume them for the

enhancement of humility, shall always find themselves *believed*, and pass for true-spoken, not self-traducers; those who do so to gain credit among "the men about town," shall be accounted liars; thus will the "saint" get credit for his "sins," and the rake no credit for his "spirit."

How little men would like, in the former case, to be supposed to speak the truth, we have a notable example in that old story of the monk who heard the confessions of a certain cardinal. "I am the chief of sinners," said the cardinal. "It is too true," said the monk. "I have been guilty of every kind of sin," sighed the cardinal. "It is a solemn fact, my son," said the monk. "I have indulged in pride, ambition, malice, and revenge," pursued his Eminence. The provoking confessor assented without one pitying word of doubt or protest. "Why, you fool," at last said the exasperated cardinal, "you don't imagine I mean all this to the letter." "Ho, ho!" said the monk, "so you have been a *liar* too, have you?"

Yours faithfully, and "without hypocrisy,"

R. E. H. G.

P. S. If you have an opportunity, please to take an exact measure of J. S——'s face. If I mistake not, you will find it at least one inch and three quarters shorter than it used to be.

## LETTER XXXII.

TO THE SAME.

MAY, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A youth of whom you knew something, though little good, young B——, has finished a short career of vice and folly by going to sea, and left his widowed mother, after all her passionate love and sacrifices, with a broken heart.

What a dance the young rascal has led his guardian angel, if indeed he ever had any; though I fancy he has given up his charge long ago in despair. The mother, it seems, has *not*; but then a mother surely is more than angel. A strange mystery of love — that parental instinct! How it outlives the worth of its object, and sets prudence, and calculation, and reason itself, all at defiance. When a child is cast off by all the rest of the world, there is one fond heart that still throbs and is breaking for him; and when every other door is closed, there is still one left ajar. There the foot-fall even of his reeling steps at midnight, as he comes from his drunken orgies, is often watched and listened for with intense agony. Such have often been the vigils, passed amidst tears and terror, of this broken-hearted widow. Beautiful, no doubt, most beautiful, is this instinct of parental love — and yet strangely akin to folly; necessary, I suppose, in this evil world, to give effect to the Divine compassion which “wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” yet, in itself, hardly reconcilable with reason.

Nevertheless a time must come, I suppose, when even this instinct would be wearied out, if fathers and mothers were immortal upon earth, though not, perhaps, till the full tale of the “seventy times seven” had been duly told. Still, the time would come at last, when even parental love would tire of the task, “never ending, still beginning,” of witnessing alternate disobedience and repentance; when even a father must say to the ungrateful child — “The experiment is over; never more will I be to thee a father; never more shalt thou be to me a son.” Reason revolts at the absurdity of an eternal series of offences and forgivenesses.

Must it not also be so with the incorrigible children of the Father of all, — who exercises a like long-suffering?

However men may dispute about *how* experiment is to end, — whether in ultimate annihilation, or hopeless exile from the all-cheering Presence, the spectacle of a responsible being permitted eternally to transgress and eternally to repent, is an absurdity which the intellect and the moral sense alike rebel against.

But in this world, at all events, parental love is almost never extinguished. I *have* met with men whom insulted patience, accompanied with severe self-control, and a sensibility feeble by nature or subdued by habit, has armed, to all visible appearance at least, with power to cast off a worthless child. I say to all visible appearance; for we cannot be quite sure. Sometimes we see that a sudden gush of reviving tenderness sweeps away as with a flood all the barriers which a stoical pride had erected, and shows us that the fountain had been dammed up, not dry. But, however it be with men, I have never yet seen a woman, — not herself criminal, — who has utterly suppressed the yearning love for a child, however worthless.

And so this poor widow sits and weeps over the cruel flight of this detestable cub, who has robbed her, ruined her, and brought down “her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave;” as if his making off were not the very best thing that could befall her! She still persists in calling the young scamp’s misdeeds “errors,” not “crimes,” and talks of his faults being rather those of his head than his heart, — as if the young brute ever had a heart! But who can contradict her, or set his ruthless logic against the fallacies of maternal love?

For myself, if I were his father, I *think* I should bless the hour of his departure, and devoutly pray that he might get what it is likely he *will* get, — a round dozen before he has been a week on shipboard. I *think* I should feel so, I say, but I know not. As it is, I thank heaven I am



*not* his father, and so I will ease my indignation by wishing him not only the round dozen aforesaid, but a weekly repetition of the dose till he comes to a true repentance.

And perhaps it may be so. God often suffers vice thus to choose its own hard school, and then at length teaches it wisdom. When the schooling of boyhood is over, He has a *second* school for a multitude of young fools, and there, by bitter experience, enforces the lessons which milder discipline besought them to con in vain. No university for your young prodigal like that in which "swine" are the "fellow-commoners," and "famine" spreads the cloth, and the "husks," — and those grudged, — are the dainty fare. "The way of transgressors is hard," says the great book, and so it obviously must be if the transgressor is ever to be reclaimed at all. Having in obedience to intense selfishness defied all the allurements of love, it must be first taught, by a salutary severity, the *unprofitableness* of selfishness.

When I think of such cases as that of this graceless lad, whose graduation in vice, for the last four years, has been recklessly prosecuted in sight of the all unutterable sorrows he has inflicted; — when I think that every step in his career has been deliberately taken, though every step sent a pang to his mother's heart — chasing sleep from her couch, and making her gray before the time, — I know not whether to laugh or be indignant at the *cant* of that pseudo-philanthropy which persists in regarding hardened crime and fixed vice as still quite amenable to the law of kindness, and pleads for such a relaxation of penal discipline as in fact would render all penal discipline a mockery. All needless and unprofitable severity, who would not wish, on all grounds, to avoid? But as to indulgence and kindness, can any system of penal discipline afford to show the thousandth part of the long-suffering which a hardened criminal has generally set at defiance? A likely matter, that honied

words and nursery exhortations will operate on those who have, a thousand times, wrung the fibres of a mother's heart, and set at naught her tears of anguish; trampled under foot all the sanctities of home, and slept sound, and laughed, and sung, and drunk, spite of the haunting spectacle of the comprehensive ruin they have spread around them! This is to imagine that the ice which would not relent to the sun, will melt in the beams of the aurora borealis. Nothing but the "furnace" of affliction, seven times heated, can usually perform the *first part* of the process by which the adamant of a selfish heart is to be softened; and that is the method God's providence generally takes. After that, the "law of kindness" may be understood.

Hardships at sea, wreck, pinching want, captivity, sickness on a foreign shore, and, together with one or other of these, the biting memories of that love he has wronged and that home he has lost, may be the appointed "rod and ferula" to bring this poor lad, as they have thousands more, to himself.

Yours ever faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXXIII.

TO THE REV. C. ELLIS, B. D.

January, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

That the writer of the note you have enclosed should talk of the "dry repellent character" of the discussions involved in the question of the truth of Christianity, and say that they are more likely to make infidels than to reclaim them, is not wonderful; for he is evidently almost

an infidel already — at least inclined to be one ; — and I never knew any young gentleman so inclined, that could not, like most people whose wills have bribed their understandings, find arguments to suit them. But that *you* should seem to give any countenance to the nonsense that is talked on the subject in the present day, does, I confess, surprise me. You fear, you say, that so much “thorny” argument as to the “evidences” — canvassing the historic truth of the miracles, — replying to objections, — harmonizing “discrepancies,” and so forth, tends rather to nurse scepticism than to cure it ; and that you “half feel” with him on the subject. It is very natural that *he* should endeavor to evade the only mode in which, in his present condition, you can reach him ; — I say the only mode ; for try the other arguments on which you, and I, and every other Christian lays so much more stress than on *any* external evidence, — and you will soon see how easily he will turn their edge aside. Meantime there are others he cannot evade ; and he is, of course, for getting rid of them, very naturally, by this *coup de main* ; and, by the way, *if* those arguments are thorny and intricate, he and those like him, have, for their own purposes, mainly contributed to render them so. I never knew a sceptic who, in discussing the general historic evidences, did not instantly take refuge in minute “objections” and petty “discrepancies ;” which, however little they can affect the main points at issue, necessitate, of course, plenty of wrangling, nay, all the more for their very minuteness ; and the more of such objections your adversary can discover, and the greater the intricacy of the statements which his own pertinacity renders necessary, the better he is pleased. Indeed that plain, broad line of argument derived from the *external* evidences, which proves the truth of Christianity, (quite apart, I mean, from the more transcendental evidence of a

moral and experimental kind, which you and I should deem the strongest,) is in itself easy enough of apprehension, and may be stated, as it often has been, in a very few words. The things which chiefly render the subject voluminous and intricate have been the handiwork of Infidelity itself; which, ignoring the great decisive facts of evidence that carry the general verdict, hunts up, with exhaustive ingenuity, every little cavil and objection, and demands their discussion and settlement. This, of course, must needs involve a great deal of minute counter-statement, computations of authorities, citations and opposing citations, comparison of dates; tedious investigations, philological, historical, chronological, and antiquarian, — heaven knows what; and then, from amidst the thick jungle into which infidelity has voluntarily plunged, and compelled you to plunge after it, it turns round with admirable modesty, and complains of the tediousness, aridity, spinosity, and unprofitableness of these discussions!

It is much the same here as in *other* historic investigations embracing complicated evidence. The main and decisive facts shall converge to one, and but one, result; meanwhile there are enough minute points on which ingenuity may suggest doubts, and on which it will be found impossible to satisfy a disingenuous or sceptical understanding. These points, if a man choose not to acquiesce in the evidence which satisfies you and the rest of the world, *he*, not *you*, will insist on; he will pet them; make much of them; render, for refuting him, tedious circumstantial examination of irrelevant details necessary; weary himself and every soul about him with alleged trifling oppositions of testimony and discrepancies of statement; and then pleasantly declare that it is impossible to see one's way clearly through all that dust — which himself has raised!

Try the thing on any one in the mood of your young

acquaintance ; he will desire nothing better than that you should depreciate the “ external evidences of Christianity ; ” and if, as you propose, you should insist on the spiritual beauty and excellence of the religion, and the experimental proof of it from your own intimate feeling of its worth, — my life for it, the “ subjective ” young philosopher will tell you, with a complacent smile, that it *may* be all this to *you* ; but that it is evidence which can only be *yours*, not *his* ; that you, doubtless, sincerely imagine that Christianity so speaks within you, but that he is not capable of judging of that ; he has not your experience. If, thus baffled, you attempt to find any bridge of words, any viaduct of logic, by which you may reach his mind, and proceed to discuss that which, in such a mood of mind, is the only thing he can discuss, — the historic evidence, — I will answer for it, *he*, not *you*, will be the first to make the discussion the thorny thing he complains of ; he will plunge with delight into some very minute question ; he will be profoundly anxious for instant satisfaction in the great affair of the “ two genealogies of Christ ; ” he will wish to know, above all things, whether the accounts of the death of Judas can be reconciled ; the cursing the barren fig-tree will be a tremendous moral obstacle ; the question as to whether *two* blind men were cured, or *one* only, at the gate of Jericho, and whether it was as our Lord went into the city, or as he came from it, will be of paramount importance with him. Such are the things, I say, which will form his favorite topics with you ; which, if you decline, he will say that you do not fairly discuss the truth of Christianity ; and if you accept his challenge, and go into them with the requisite fulness, he will say, — just as he *does* say, — that the evidences of Christianity are voluminous, and dry, and thorny, and intricate, and interminable, and intolerable ! — But *he* has first made them so.

It is plain, of course, that in discussing the question with him, it will be your duty as much as possible to recall him constantly to the great leading lines of historic argument, and induce him if you can, to see that it is question of *a balance of evidence*. You must, if possible, guard yourself and him from playing hide and seek in trivial objections which never *have* prevented, which never *will* prevent, the majority of men from acquiescing in the substantial truth of Christianity in spite of such cavils. But if you talk with him at all, you must, *in his present mood*, resort to the external evidences, because they are the only ones in which there can be any access of your mind to his, or of his to yours ; it is the bridge between you just now, and the only one ; not the best bridge, perhaps, but the best you have. Therefore, if you would not give in to any pernicious delusion, which he would very well like to spread, do not talk in the style of your last letter about the — danger of discussing the Christian evidences !

If you say that it is a pity you cannot immediately assail him with that species of evidence, — the spiritual and experimental, — which *you* feel to be so much more potent, it is so indeed ; for if he were in a condition to appreciate it, you need not insist on it at all ; he would already *feel* it, and be beyond the need of your logic, because already convinced. If you say it is a pity that you should be compelled to argue Christianity on lower ground than *you* feel it is entitled to occupy, *that* also is true ; but then it is your opponent's fault, not yours ; if you wish to do him good, you must attempt it in the ways, and the only ways he leaves open to you. You may regret that he will walk with you only in moonlight, when he might do so by sunlight ; but if you wish to aid him in his journey, you must not refuse to go because he chooses an inconvenient hour and an uncertain light.

If you say that it appears to give him an advantage, to argue the matter on less than what you feel the highest grounds, — it is very true; but you are to recollect that you may lament, but cannot envy, his tactics; his victories, like those of Pyrrhus, are victories that may well ruin him. Meantime, you must do battle with him, if you do battle with him at all, on common ground. The one cannot fight in the heavens, and the other on the earth.

If you say that perhaps it would be better to decline controversy with such men altogether, and trust exclusively to the silent persuasion of a lofty, consistent, practical exhibition of a Christian *life*, — I assure you that whatever importance you attach to this last, I attach just as much; so much, that *if* all Christians, or Christians in general, did full justice to this argument, I believe it would produce more effect than all other arguments put together; but if you can do your opponents any good by word of mouth, as well as by this silent eloquence too, — especially as this silent eloquence is often lacking — pray do not decline doing so; but then be pleased to recollect that *if* you attempt it, you must not throw cold water on the only sort of topics which can be argued between you.

I must once more insist that through our internal experimental proof of the truth of Christianity is to *us* the greatest of all, it is also the one most easily evaded, so far as any mere statement of it goes. If polite the infidel will say, with a smile, — “I dare say you think so. I dare say you are quite sincere in your confident tone;” and if conceited will add, “but in *my* judgment, it is all enthusiasm — fanaticism — ‘*Schwarzmerci*’ — it is all ‘subjective,’ I want the ‘objective;’” and so, if you talk with him at all, to the external and historic you must perforce both go. However, as I have said, you make the experiment for yourself.

The examples you allege seem to me utterly beside the purpose. You quote the passage of Cowper's Cottager, “spinning at her own door,”—

“ Who knew, and only knew, the Bible true —  
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew,”—

and then ask, “what she could have gained by reading Paley's Evidences?” Why little or nothing, of course. But what conceivable relation is there between her and those for whom such books are chiefly, and indeed in the last result, solely written? for it is to guard against possible attacks from those who “believe not,” that they become of any value to those who do. If already convinced by that more intimate knowledge, that spiritual illumination, that “peace” which the bible brings to all who truly love it and live according to it (as was the case with Cowper's poor spinner), every such work as Paley's is utterly useless, except as it is always well not only to have implicit and unconscious, but conscious and explicit, reasons of the “hope that is in us.” She had, as all such have, a vivid faith, which can dispense with all books of evidence; but what has this got to do with the case of infidelity? What bearing has it on the best method of dealing with one who is averse to Christianity? Of what use is it to urge that it is not necessary to adopt any such method with those who *love* it?

I am so far from having any difference with you on this point, that I quite agree in thinking that those preachers err, if indeed there are any such,—I cannot think there are many in our day,—who make the “evidences” of Christianity and objections against it the staple of their sermons to their already convinced flocks. Whether, as you think, such “sermons” tend rather to excite doubt than to appease it, I know not; but assuredly it may well make folks impatient to hear *that* continually iterated which



they do not dispute, and that proved of which they never doubt; nor can they get spiritually fat on such a lean Alpine pasturage. In some instances too, it may well be that the very objections which might never have been heard of but for such unwise obtrusion of them, may occasion doubts which the answer would not remove. If I were a preacher, I should certainly take opportunity, now and then, as it fairly offered itself, to give folks a clear and brief statement of the outline of the Christian evidences, and the principal grounds on which a reasonable faith is founded — on the principle that they ought to be, like the Berean converts, intelligent as well as sincere Christians. But I should as little think of descanting frequently or diffusely on infidel objections, as of talking to an apple-woman about the principles of political economy, on which, like the rest of the world, she, without knowing it, bought and sold. But what has all this to do with the mode in which you are to deal with the infidel himself? If the road be thorny, still he chooses it, even while he complains of its ruggedness, and you must needs follow him.

You say, and say truly, that you cannot but think that the Bible so reflects, as in a mirror, the great facts of man's spiritual condition and necessities, that if any one will read it with "simplicity," he must feel how true it is to our nature. I quite agree with you; but, first, a man may admit the *wants* of human nature, yet object to the Bible mode of meeting them; may admit the disease, and yet reject the remedy. Now the very question is here; and directly the man comes to *that*, the historical problem returns; for surely as long as he doubts the remedy, he is not likely to take it. What are the *facts* of Christianity, and on what grounds are they to be accepted as such? — this question he perforce in such a mood must revolve. A man may admit a vague, or even distinct sense — there are few, that

are not idiots, but will — of man’s moral destitution; his weakness, guilt and fears; his uncertainty on all the great moral problems which it most imports us to know; whence we came, and whither we are going; — but he will not, on *that* account, take the remedy proposed, unless he believes it to be such. Do not then, since you must deal with such men, fall into the foolish cant which represents it of little use to argue with them on the question of the “Christian evidences” — for though you may think, and think justly, that the men defraud themselves of a great benefit when they make the evidences so “long and thorny a path,” it is the path for the present in which alone you can encounter them.

And then, secondly, as to reading the New Testament with “simplicity,” this is, in fact, to suppose the principal work done; get them to do that, and you need not argue with them long. Meantime, I fancy *your* “simplicity” is great, if you expect they will do it. For my own part, I think it is but too plain that the generality of such folks read the Bible for no other purpose than to hunt up objections. They are like the sceptic of whom Fuller says — “He keeps a register of many difficult places of Scripture; not that he desires satisfaction therein, but delights to puzzle divines therewith; and counts it a great conquest when he hath posed them. Unnecessary questions out of the Bible are his most necessary study; and he is more curious to know where Lazarus’s soul was, the four days he lay in the grave, than careful to provide for his own soul when he shall be dead.”

In a word, your position in reference to such is much like that of the ethical philosopher in relation to some young idiot, — we now and then meet with one, — who protests he can see no distinction between “moral right and wrong,” — believes that conscience is a bundle of “conven-

tionalities ” and “artificial associations,” and the rest of the gibberish proper to that theory. You may decline reasoning with him, certainly, but if you *do*, it is of no use to insist on the transcendental evidence which you have in your own consciousness, of which he denies the experience in himself; — though, by the bye, you may perhaps shrewdly suspect the young scamp lies; — nor can you insist on the “sublimity, and beauty, and grandeur” of Virtue and the “deformity” of Vice, since he denies their very existence. Happily there are not many such people; but if you reason with them at all, you must take the old way of logic and induction, — you must reason from *facts*: and assuredly you will then soon find them complaining of this “dry, logical” treatment of the subject; they at the same time, by every art of sophistry, making it ten times as “thorny” as it need be!

If you do *not* choose to argue with such a man in the only way his peculiar position allows, you must close the dispute with Dr. Johnson’s concise dilemma, — “Either the man believes what he says, or he does not; if he does *not*, he is a liar; if he does, why, then, let us count our spoons!”

Most cordially do I agree with you that, to those who will experimentally prove Christianity, there is evidence as far transcending all logical demonstration as the consciousness of the happiness of well-doing surpasses a mere intellectual conviction that virtue will *lead* to happiness.

It is our felicity that we “know whom we have believed;” — that we “speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen,” when we say that the Gospel is no “cunningly devised fable.” I also firmly believe that even he who does not fully yield to it, will do so if he honestly examines with a desire to understand and a willingness to receive it. “He that will do the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” But this requires do-

cility and candor: where there are these, the "evidences" in the ordinary sense would be brief enough, and would no longer be "thorny."

Yours ever faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

P. S. This is a tract rather than a letter; but the immense importance of the subject induced me to express my thoughts very fully.

## LETTER XXXIV.

TO THE REV. S. W——.

MARCH, 1845.

MY DEAR MR. W——,

As a comparative stranger, I have no right to trouble you with advice; yet as a sincere well-wisher, who admires your talents, and is most anxious that you should do justice to the glorious function you have assumed, permit me to make one or two remarks on a sentiment which I lately heard you express, and which a little alarmed me for your success.

You said, I recollect, that "as you were going to a remote country village, it would be easy to satisfy your rustic congregation; that you did not apprehend they would make large demands on preparation; and that simple truth, expressed in simple language, would be quite enough for *them*."

Enough, I am sure, if the words be rightly understood; only I fancy that, if that be the case, it will be found that "simple truth, expressed in simple language," must involve very careful preparation. "Simple truth" must not mean common-place, nor "simple language" any plain words that come to hand. If you would produce any lively or durable impression on any audience (rustic or polished matters not),

you must give them thoughts that *strike*, and these must be expressed in *apt* words ; and to speak in this fashion will require, depend on it, very careful study. Take heed of the fallacies lurking in the terms “simple truth” and “simple language ;” for they are rocks on which many a man has struck.

“Simple truth” — *the* simple truth of the Gospel, — I trust, will ever be the basis of your preaching, as I am sure you desire it to be. Apart from that assemblage of doctrines and precepts which can alone make Christianity a thing worth listening to by sorrowful and guilty humanity, all pulpit eloquence will be but “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” I hope, too, that these truths (as you propose) will be expressed in “simple language.” But Truth — the most important truth a preacher can enforce — may be easy of comprehension, and it may be expressed in forms none can misunderstand, and yet its advocate may have utterly neglected his entire duty notwithstanding. His business is, by apt method, arrangement, illustration, imagery, vivacity of language, animation both of style and manner, to render Truth, not simply understood, assented to with a drowsy nod, then *slept over*, — but felt ; not only known, which, by the way, it generally is before he opens his lips, — but the object of sympathetic intelligence, and the source of emotion ; to animate it with life, to clothe it with beauty, and make it worthy of “all acceptance.”

Now, to do all this for your rustic audience, will demand, (take my word for it,) not less study and effort than if you were preaching to the most polished audience in the land : in some respects more, for you might legitimately speak to these last (and perhaps more easily to yourself) on many subjects which would be mere Hebrew and Greek to the parishioners of your *Ultima Thule* ; and, for similar reasons, the range of your diction will also be more limited.

On the other hand, rely on it (and I say it after much observation of the effects of public speaking), if the topics are such as your audience can deal with (and let me tell you they can deal with a good deal more than is generally thought), none of the pains you may bestow on your discourses — on the arrangement of your thoughts, and on your modes of illustrating and expressing them — will be thrown away. Your audience, however rustic, will show that they appreciate excellence of style, though they may not be conscious of the *why*, and perhaps never dream — simple souls! — that you are eloquent at all. So much the better, my dear sir; — and better still, if, which is much more difficult, you can forget it too.

However, though they know nothing of “analytical criticism,” nothing of the “principles of logic and rhetoric,” *you* do; and you will see that if you comply with the genuine “rules of art,” by truly adapting your discourse to your audience, your audience will show that they naturally obey the laws of criticism, though they do not comprehend them. They will show here, as in other cases, the characters “of the law written on their hearts,” though never studied in the codes of rhetoricians. Among your rustic hearers, as well as among the most refined of our species, pathos will exact its tears; affection and earnestness, sympathy. With them, as with their betters, vivacious imagery and force of diction will light up the eye, and awaken intelligence, attention, and emotion.

The fact is, that great injustice is often done to plebeian hearers. The praise which is lavished on the critical Athenians, as though they were miracles of taste, because they hung with rapture on the lips of Demosthenes, is nearly as applicable to many other crowds. Look at the history of our great political speakers. Take the most famous names of the House of Commons. Was it *there* only they were

listened to with rapture? Were not Fox and Burke as welcome at the hustings as ever they were at St. Stephens? Did not promiscuous crowds listen as applaudingly as their more select audience of fellow representatives? Is it not so always? Take again the greatest preachers. Have not men of all orders of intelligence, and of the widest degrees of culture, formed their congregations?

Speaking of the difference between provincial dialects and the national idiom, — the latter of which is understood by those who speak the former, though the former may be unintelligible to those who speak the latter, — Dr. Kenrick curiously observes: “The case of languages, or rather speech, is quite contrary to that of science; in the former, the ignorant understand the learned, better than the learned do the ignorant; in the latter it is otherwise.” Something like it may be said of true eloquence: a common artisan may appreciate the point, force, vivacity, of a discourse, nay, instinctively feel the elegance and music of it, and not be able to speak a single sentence grammatically. You will not, of course, suppose that I wish you to attempt a style, whether of thought or expression, ambitiously above your rude flock; *that* would be anything but true eloquence in *my* esteem: all I mean is, that there is to them, as to every one, as great a difference between a commonplace treatment of the very same Christian truth, and one really adapted to awaken attention and kindle emotion, as there is between the style of the dullest retailer of soporific truisms and the style of Demosthenes; and that to attain such a genuine eloquence, if you have, as I believe you have, a sacred ambition to do good, is well worth your utmost diligence and is not to be attained without it.

Forgive this little exercitation on “Rhetoric,”

And believe me

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

P. S. I intend, next summer, to visit your part of the country; if so, I shall ensconce myself some Sunday morning in a remote pew, in your old-fashioned church, and see how far you have thought my remarks worth attention!

## LETTER XXXV.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

SUTTON, Oct. 1845.

MY DEAR MASON,

I know you *used* to take a lively interest in that old metaphysical dispute, — which, I suppose, like most other metaphysical disputes, will be always revived and never decided, — as to whether our *habitual* actions are *automatic*; or whether, however rapid they are and however little trace they may leave on our consciousness, they will in each case interpose with a special act. You used, I remember, to take the former view, while I rather inclined to the latter. Last night, a most absurd thing happened to me, which almost inclines me to take your side. And yet, as you will see, I am not sure that the pleasant ingenuity with which mind is always too subtle for itself when it asks its wise self about its own phenomena, cannot find plenty of arguments against it. But first to my fact. Except to you who know me, it might perhaps seem incredible.

You are aware of my fidgetiness about *fire*; reason good, — since I was once within an ace of being burnt down through a neighbor's negligence. Nevertheless, by the way, I am so wakeful that I almost always, in summer read in bed, undisturbed by any fear lest somnolence should surprise me before I have extinguished the light. In winter, I find it hard to leave the fireside and go shivering to those *hyperborean* regions above stairs; and sometimes have sat



up (I am ashamed to say) half the night, musing and reading, from sheer reluctance to confront the miseries of those arctic regions. Well, at last, still in a reverie (I should think *this* absurdity has happened to me some scores of times), I have lighted a chamber candle, gone to bed, and then, when the light has been extinguished and I am just beginning to get cosey, I have been perversely unable to recollect whether I have put out the candles below, or not! After having in vain tried (as usual in such cases) to coax reason and conscience into the belief that all is right, — and sometimes I in vain have debated the matter a good half hour, — I have found that there was no help for it but turning out, groping my way down stairs, and *seeing*, I was going to say, if all was perspicuously dark! Strange to say, I never did yet find that the habitual act, of which I should have been so glad, on many a cold night, to catch the faintest reminiscence, had failed me. I always found that the light had been extinguished, though the remembrance of the act had been simultaneously extinguished too. This, in the course of my solitary life of the last twenty years, had occurred to me, as I have said, considerably more than a score of times. “What a fool you must be!” I imagine I hear you say, *sotto voce*; but it is nothing to my folly of last night — if, indeed, I ought not rather to take it as a proof of a profound capacity of abstraction! For, will you believe it? after making this unwilling journey, I found, on regaining my chamber, that in the very act of descending, my mind had been arrested by the subject which had been previously occupying my thoughts, and I had actually come back, unconscious — totally unconscious — as to whether the candles had been extinguished or not! Luckily, I had not got into bed, or else, the night being cold, I almost think I should have preferred the risk of being burned down to going down stairs again. As it was, down I went, and, by due and diligent effort to

keep my mind from wandering, peered into the darkness, and clearly saw that there was nothing to be seen. This is literal fact.

Now such a thing is almost enough to convince me of what, at *other* times, opposite arguments have convinced me is false — namely, that our habitual actions may be perfectly automatic, and that Mistress Mind, having given general orders to the footmen and housemaids of her organism, to do such and such things, said menials proceed to execute them, while Mind retires to her “pineal gland,” or wherever else she pleases to go, and troubles herself no more about the matter. It is a very pretty little theory; but, like most other metaphysical theories, is capable of being confronted and confuted by equally conclusive arguments; while (what is the most provoking thing of all) that very Mind, about whose condition the whole dispute is, takes alternately both sides, or stands staring at herself like a dolt, and cannot tell whether she has anything to do with the said acts or not.

Yet, with due submission, I must think, after all, that, on the whole, the arguments in favor of Mind's having something to do with even the most automatic of our actions preponderate. The principal arguments against it are the inconceivable rapidity of the acts, and the subsequent unconsciousness of the mind's having had any part in them. As to the last argument, begging Mind's pardon, I do not think it worth a button, considering how deplorably ignorant Mind is of herself and her doings, which, from time immemorial, she has been perpetually disputing about. Her opinion, either way, founded on her knowing nothing about the matter, cannot be of much importance. It is too plain that she is every day, and still more every night, occupied, in her flighty way, with a thousand thoughts of which she retains no traces in the memory!

As to the former argument, the mere *rapidity* of the acts ; — for example, of a rope-dancer's ever-shifting postures, — a conjurer's tricks, — a skilled musician's complicated, and all but simultaneous movements, — a public speaker's voluble utterance, — as to these, and the like stock examples, of those who take your side of the question, they do not, I confess, much move me : and that for a reason which I do not recollect having seen insisted on by any metaphysical writer, but which appears to me absolutely conclusive on the subject ; for, *ought* the mere velocity of material movement, which we see in all these cases *is* attained, to be any argument against the possibility of equal velocity of thought and volition ? Ought we not, *à fortiori*, to judge that if eyes and fingers — mere material organs — can and do perform such inexpressibly nimble feats, Mind can more than keep up with them ? And, if so, that very velocity will serve to explain the former difficulty, to which I have already given an answer not quite so complimentary to Mind, — that no trace is left in the consciousness. That, probably, is due to the very rapidity with which the acts are performed.

And yet how strange it seems, now I think of it, that Mind, which is urging all this in its own behalf, and using its too notorious obliviousness as an argument in favor of its activity, should not be able to decide the matter, and is probably only saying what will appear to you the most improbable conjecture !

Yet I may further say, in defence of the hypothesis I rather prefer, that some of the strongest instances sometimes urged against it are really in its favor. The supposed automatic movements on which its opponents lay so much stress, are often, as appears to me, by no means automatic, but necessarily imply, in many cases, however rapid, an equally rapid succession of distinct and conscious mental

acts. An accomplished master of the piano, for example, will play at sight the most intricate music with his hands as well as with his feet as he will play at sight at any time. Now the combinations are not made up by him. The same may be said of the man of the finished encyclopaedist's speciality. The series of mental changes are so rapid and yet there is an underlying distinct intellectual effort and direction. I do not say, however, as your constant reference to your mind as I look at a machine before some great work—how rapid and complicated are the movements—how they fly over the keys—how they strike the most intricate harmonies, yet find time to draw out the scale and find the white keys and feet are finding out their way to the pedals—the whole mind working as if it were about to explode into space under some tremendous internal force.—I am ready to ask whether I can be that Mind & presence at every act and observe a distinct working of the mind: so, whether she could not be so much to give a more distinct account of the matter? I am as to the question of memory I have answered that: and as to the value of memory, why, if your Mind has been thus working and directed, is it any wonder that she gives me distinctly what she does, acts? Well, we must leave it there. Her mind seems to me more powerful than that of those who are rapid combinations of our individual work which they do at each step and which seem to be the result of a mental activity. Mind is always, not only the power of work.

But it is pretty strange that Mind can be so much as to tell the account of the matter & being not at all at all entirely.

I am yours,

A. J. J.

## LETTER XXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

SUTTON COLEFIELD, October, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Instead of an attentive reconsideration of our old metaphysical problem, based on the curious experiences I sent you, you have favored me with a lecture on my late hours; and assure me that if I went to bed earlier, and rose earlier, I should not have any such experiences. On my word, it is sharp practice to make such an exceedingly irrelevant use of my arguments against myself!

I quite agree with you, my dear friend, in all you can say in praise of early rising; *probo meliora*; and have done so in this matter any time these twenty years. I believe firmly there is scarcely one habit which youth can form so important as that of early rising, — so conducive to health of body, to a vigorous old age, to regularity and method, to success in life, — in short, one might go on to the “nineteenth head” of discourse on this subject; so I will spare you, and say *Amen*!

He who begins late in the morning, and bustles about in a vain effort to overtake the clock, is in the condition of the good man who said he had lost a quarter of an hour and was afterwards running after it all day and could not catch it.

“Fine *sentiments*!” you will say. Oh! if you are for fine sentiment, I can give it far finer, and in the purest Johnsonese, as Mr. Macaulay would say; — as thus; “The hours which are wasted in superfluous slumber must be deducted from the sum total of mortal existence; nor is it paradoxical to affirm that the man of eighty who should compute the time which he has thus subtracted from his life,

ought not to imagine himself to have passed beyond the limits of threescore years and ten."

"Then I am ten years younger than I thought myself," I am afraid an incorrigible old sinner in this kind would be apt to say. — But it is easy to preach: the great moralist I have just ventured to mimic for a moment was preaching on this very topic all his days, and never reformed himself.

Nevertheless all you say is true enough; and yet—and yet—oh! the slavery of *habit*! I have been lecturing myself for twenty years, and must say I have ever found myself a most attentive auditor, and still it is in vain. However, I believe I should not be so quiet under self-reproach if I did not believe that I had sufficient excuses. "There," you will say, "that will do; I have no hope of you." Nay; strike, but hear me. (Conscience, be quiet, I say; what a clamor you are making!—I can't hear myself speak for you; ahem!—) I protest that my example, at least for many years past, has afforded not the shadow of an excuse for any one's following it. I cannot say I have wasted my time in sleep; I have not for these twenty years had sleep enough; I rarely get so many as six hours' sleep in the four-and-twenty.

Next; I generally go to bed at very late hours, or rather very early—1, 2, 3, A. M., as the case may be. Aye, you will perhaps say, that is a reason why you sleep so ill. Stop a minute. I have tried both early and late hours; and, in either case, have often been visited with a sleeplessness so intense, that I have been obliged to get up, and read during the rest of the night. Many a cold winter's night have I risen and lighted a fire, rather than remain turning from side to side in vivid wakefulness without something to divert thought. To let the mill go round without grist—this is desperate work, let me tell you, for the mental machinery! But, as a physiologist, you know

that well enough. Under such circumstances, do not blame me if I take sleep when I can get it. Lastly, I cannot say that when I have indulged in — what is certainly very luxurious — an hour or two of matin meditation in bed, it has been time wasted, or often spent in unprofitable thought. On the contrary, I am conscious, in common with many much greater men, that my mind has never wrought so freely as then, nor presented to me so many thoughts I should wish to retain. Unhappily, they often will not come again, when I have once risen.

If it be said this is a dangerous apology, I answer that it is no apology at all; it is a simple fact, of which I am not ashamed. *Honi soit.* Each man must judge for himself. To me, I say, such late hours are needful, and, waking or sleeping, are not hours of sloth. So that you see, like Daniel O'Rourke, I am a man more to be pitied than blamed among you. I acknowledge that I often find things going so wrong, — such miserable dislocation of the engagements of the day, (owing to breakfast always being a “movable feast” between eight and ten) — that I cannot quite appease conscience; but then, when the jade has once got the habit of complaining, she will often go on maundering and muttering in the most unreasonable manner.

I have no doubt you enjoyed your view of the sunrise in your recent journey. And so you would have me suppose that you have often seen it, and are pleased to suppose that I never have! As to you, — if you *had* often seen it, you would never have broken out into these raptures; it is the rarity of the spectacle, my friend, that has made you so eloquent. From your transports, I am induced to question whether you ever saw it before in your life. As to me, let me tell you I have seen it several times. Yes, several; once on the top of a coach, in the olden times, when I was travelling *all night*, — once on board a steamer in the *same*

*predicament*,—once when I slept on Snowdon on purpose,—and once again on the Righi. Pray don't suppose that no one ever saw the rising sun except yourself. But it is too glorious a spectacle to be seen often; familiarity would breed contempt; the thing would become too cheap. Let us, my fine fellow, economize, and be chary of, such delights!

I had a dear friend, who ingeniously proved that though very late in the morning for many years, he was always an early riser. He said that, in his youth, he had risen for years much too early—four and half-past four, A. M.; when I knew him, nine and half-past nine was his hour; but he contended that, striking “a mean” between his excesses and defects, he still reckoned that he rose about seven regularly. I am not quite sure, if I were to take “the mean” of my own doings in this way, that *I* could not prove myself a regular early riser too.

I remember once hearing an aged relative expostulate with a youth, his nephew, on his lying in bed; he pleaded the *difficulty* of getting up. “Difficulty!” the other said; “there is no difficulty in it. I have risen at five for these forty years, and I could not lie in bed after that.” “My dear uncle,” said the young scapegrace, “and *I* cannot get up. If you want to measure my difficulty in getting up, you ought to lie in bed till nine. It is really no credit in you to be an early riser!”

However, in spite of all the *badinage* in this letter, be assured that none can be convinced more deeply than I, of the excellence of your advice in general, and of its futility to me in particular. Now is not that just what all your patients tell you?

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.



## LETTER XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 1845.

MY DEAR MASON,

For “auld lang syne’s” sake, I am again going to discourse to you of one of our old metaphysical problems; though I am afraid that, as before, you will prove yourself unworthy of our College aspirations, refuse to deal with any such knotty questions, and treat me with a musty lecture on the duty of going to bed early, and, what is harder, rising early. However, I heard the other day as pretty an argument as you could desire to hear, on a summer’s day, on that old question, — “Does the mind *always think, even in sleep?*”

“Between whom?” you will say. Well, between myself and me; and, strange as it may seem, never were two people of more opposite opinions. “And how did it end?” In that charming haze, my friend, in which nearly all disputes that concern that elaborately self-ignorant thing, the Mind of man, are so apt to end. I assure you, as I listened, I seemed to doubt of, and to acquiesce in, each ingenious argument; in short, felt tossed to and fro, like a shuttlecock between two battledores — only that *I* unluckily was both shuttlecock and the battledores. What a mystery of mysteries that same mind is! That it should ask itself — and, for the life of it, cannot tell itself — whether it is always *conscious* or not! That it should be equally ignorant of a thousand other things about its own self? How humiliating, that that which maps the heavens, tracks the planets, calculates eclipses, covers the earth with the monuments of its science and art, should thus grope, and stumble, and blunder, when it crosses its own dark threshold; nay, dis-

pute everlastingly with itself and others, what it is, and where and how it exists! Surely we ought to be modest people. To think of one's mind asserting against other minds, and often against itself in different moods, — sometimes with ludicrous dubiety, as often with more ludicrous dogmatism, — the most contradictory conclusions respecting its very self! To think that Mind does not know whether it always thinks; whether, for half its time, it is conscious or unconscious, busy or idle!

The dialogue began something in this way. I, who felt disposed to think that the mind *always* thinks, even in the deepest slumber, — that is, dreams even when it does not remember it, — asked myself, —

"Do you not acknowledge that we know nothing of either matter or mind, except from their *properties*; the one made known to us by our sensations, and the other by our consciousness?"

"I do," said Mind, with the confidence of an oracle, though thus avowing its ignorance of itself.

"If you were asked what Matter was, would you not say, that it is *that* which possesses solidity, divisibility, impenetrability, and so on?" enumerating the other essential qualities of matter.

"I should," said Mind.

"And in like manner would you not say, Mind is *that* which possesses the qualities of thought and feeling?"

"I should," still said Mind.

"If, now, you were asked what matter was, when divested of those *essential* properties, — stripped of solidity, and so forth, — what would you say? Would you not say that if it ceased to have such essential properties, *that* which you call matter existed no longer — that it was annihilated?"

"I should," Mind said.

"Then ought you not to say the same of *mind*, if its *essential* properties — those by which alone you know that it exists at all — were taken away from it? Ought you not, therefore, to say that mind is annihilated every time you sleep without *thinking*; and created afresh every time you wake from such a state?"

I really thought it was a very pretty little dilemma; but Mind could argue though it could not prove, and was not going to be balked by such a trifle as the loss of its essential properties. "Nay," said Mind, "the *powers* of thought remain in me, though not *exerted*."

"Nay," said I; "you surely are not impudent enough to pretend that you are *conscious* that you have powers while you say you have absolutely no consciousness? But let that pass. — Would you say, then, if you could conceive of such a thing as matter denuded of what is its essential property of solidity, that the *power* of solidity was there, only no longer *exercised*? Would you not rather say that, for aught you could conceive, matter, which you knew only by such properties as this, existed no longer?"

"I certainly should," sighed Mind.

"Then you ought to say the same of mind."

Argument the first; which made me think that the mind always thinks, though Mind itself protested against it. But Mind retorted it very cleverly. It began to illustrate the point, first, from chemical facts which show that heat, for example, is present in bodies, though latent; and that the same substance may exist in *allotropic* forms; nevertheless the matter did not seem quite plain to me. But it ingeniously proceeded to say, —

"Do you not think that the mind *exists* before it *acts*? The mind in the embryo, for example, — of the 'rational animal,' the moment it comes into the world, — must it

not already exist before it acts? and does it not wait to *exercise* thought and feeling till, by a slow process, the senses aid its development? If so, does not the mind exist, though its essential powers be dormant? And if so, may it not be in just such a state in deep sleep?"

This seemed a staggerer, I confess; but I was a bold metaphysician, and I scrupled not to rejoin, — forgetting the rebuke I had administered to Mind for falling into a like blunder, — "If, by saying that the mind of the embryo or of the newly-born infant, cannot *think*, you mean that it cannot understand the 'Principia' of Newton or Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' I grant it; but I deny that it does not manifest its *essential properties*, though not in perfection. Mind feels, and that is one of the forms of consciousness; — it has sensations."

"Surely," said Mind, slyly, "you have not the impudence to pretend that you are conscious that you had feelings in states of which you are wholly unconscious. But let that pass, as you said to me. — Pray, had you *thoughts* in that state as well as feelings?"

"Yes, and *thoughts*," said I, boldly, — for I was not going to give up my argument for a trifle, — "thoughts, though very rudimentary, of course; for how can there be *sensation* without *thought*? So that though," I continued, with exquisite logical precision, "though, in the order of thought, the *existence* of the mind is before its *action*, yet in fact its existence and its action are synchronous; and the one begins when the other does."

Argument second; — and still I seemed to think that the argument for perpetual thought had the best of it, though I confess I felt that myself and I were whimsically perplexed about a matter which *ought* surely to have been as plain as consciousness could make it!

Here we left the dark maze of essences and essential

properties, and embryo states, and came out into the open campaign of facts, and the inductive philosophy. "Now," thought I, "we shall be able to see." Not a whit. Luckless Mind! Bacon might as well not have written, for any power his philosophy gives of solving such a question, — which, however, would seem to need no solving at all, but a simple reference to every man's own consciousness. But now for *facts*.

"If," said I, in a *didactic* and patronizing way, as though I were not talking to myself and striving to enlighten my own ignorance, "If you take notice, Mind, you will find, on awaking from sleep, that, on instantly reverting to consciousness, you have always been *thinking, dreaming* of something, and will immediately recall it."

But Mind, after a minute's reflection, protested that it had no such uniform consciousness — that it thought it often recollected having been awakened out of profound sleep, with an utter blank of memory when it sought for what it was last thinking about. Here was a fix; Mind not knowing whether it had been thinking the moment before or not! "Oh! Mind, Mind," thought I, innocently, "what a fool you are making of yourself!" The *first* person would have been more proper.

"But again," said Mind, "as to that last argument, supposing the fact just as you state, it proves nothing; the mind is so active that long trains of thought, which seem to have occupied hours, may pass through the mind in a minute, — which I often experience when I take an afternoon nap; I seem to have slept for hours, and my watch tells me I have slept but for five minutes; thus the supposed recollected dream might all be manufactured in the very instant between sleeping and waking." I thought again, and could not deny that it might be so. "And yet," retorted I, "though you suppose the mind so active as to crowd ages

into moments, you suppose it is actually dormant during the greater part of every night? And again, — granting, as you say, that you can spin, what seems to be six hours' dreaming, in a minute, — you cannot tell, *except by the watch*, whether you have been a minute or six hours about it, and often think the last when you have been asleep but for an instant! Of what value," said I, complacently, as if I were no way concerned in the rebuke, "is the testimony of one that is thus caught *napping*? In short, Mind, to tell you a bit of my mind, I do not believe you know a word about the matter."

Mind smiled, and said it knew just as much as I did; which recalled me to the most paradoxical fact of all — that it is we ourselves who in such controversies ask ourselves what is our own consciousness, and, instead of giving an intelligible answer, can only stare at ourselves idiotically. . . . .

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

TO MISS MARY GREYSON.

SEXTON, July 7, 1846.

MY DEAR NIECE,

I am going to write you a long letter; but I scarcely think it will be pleasant to you to read it, — for it is to chide you. Yet, as you know I should not chide you except for your good, or what I *believed* your good, I hope you will read these lines attentively, for your loving uncle's sake.

I saw, my dear, with regret, during my recent visit, that you are too fond — far too fond — of novel reading. There;

I see your imploring look, and hear the expostulation, "Oh, uncle!—do you really think so?" Of course I think so, Mary, or I should not say so, for I never say what I do not think.

But I certainly do not expect to hear from you, my love,—for you are a girl of sense (be pleased to recollect, again, that I do not say what I do not think,—will not that propitiate you?),—the answer I once received from a young lady to whom I addressed a similar expostulation. "I suppose, then," said she, "you would disapprove of *all* novel reading?" That, thought I, is an answer perfectly worthy of one whose logic has been fed on novels. "If," said I to her, "I were to blame a lad for eating too much, or too voraciously, or filling his stomach with tarts and sugar-plums, would you infer that *therefore* I meant that he was not to eat at all, or that pastry and sweatmeats were absolutely forbidden him?"

No, I am far from thinking that novels may not be innocently read;—so far from that, I think they may be *beneficially* read. But all depends, as in the case of the tarts and sugar-plums, on the quality and quantity.

The *imagination* is a faculty given us by God, as much as any other, and if it be not developed, our minds are maimed. Now, works of fiction,—of a high order, I mean, such as the best of Walter Scott's or Miss Edgeworth's,—healthfully stimulate this faculty; and in measure, therefore, they should be read.

*Taste* should be cultivated,—and fictitious works, inspired by real genius, have a beneficial tendency that way.

Novels may, and often do, inculcate important lessons of life and conduct, in a more pleasing form than the simply didactic style admits of.

When based on knowledge of human nature, and developed with dramatic skill, a novel may teach many an im-

portant truth of moral philosophy more effectively than an abstruse treatise on it.

When the *style* of novels is what it ought to be, — and what it will be, if they are worth reading, — they tend (always an important part of education) to add to our knowledge of language, and our command over it.

Lastly, as we must all have *some* mental relaxation (and if the greater part of our hours be diligently given to duty, we are both entitled to it and in need of it), such relaxation is easily and legitimately found in the occasional perusal of a judicious work of fiction.

You see how liberal I am, and that it is no old, musty, strait-laced critic that speaks to you: therefore “perpend my words.”

Everything, you observe, depends on *quality* and *quantity*. These must determine whether the novels you read be mental aliment or mental poison. Now, as to the *first*, I have no hesitation in saying that the immense majority of novels have no tendency to fulfil any of the ends I have pointed out; they are mere rubbish; and, forgive me, several of those I recently saw in your hands from your circulating library deserve no other character. For my part, I should not care if some Caliph Omar treated all novels — except some three thousand volumes or so — as the original Caliph treated the Alexandrian Library, and made a huge bonfire of them. “Three thousand volumes!” you will say; “why that is at the rate of a novel a week for twenty years! You are liberal, indeed.”

Very true; but I did not say you would do well to read them all, though as many may be worth reading. And let me tell you, that you may infer something else from my admission. With so many more *good* novels at command than you can possibly read, will you not be utterly inexcusable if you indulge in any of the trumpery of which I



have been just speaking? Rely upon it, my dear, that the reading of the second and third and fourth-rate class of novels not only does not secure any of the ends of which I have spoken above, but has a directly contrary tendency. These books enfeeble the intellect — impoverish the imagination — vulgarize taste and style — give false or distorted views of life and human nature, — and, what is perhaps worst of all, waste that precious time which might be given to solid mental improvement. I assure you I have often been astonished and grieved at the manner in which young minds, originally capable of better things, have been injured by continual dawdling over the slip-slop of inferior novels. They sink insensibly to the level of such books; and, how can it be otherwise? — for this pernicious appetite, “which grows by what it feeds on,” prevents the mind’s coming in contact with anything better, and these wretched compositions become the standard. Observe that these minds are enfeebled, not only in tone, — for *that* would result from reading too much of *any* novels, even the best, just as the stomach would get disordered from eating too much pastry, though the Queen’s daintiest cooks might make it; — but I mean enfeebled, degraded in taste, — in the perception of the True and the Beautiful in works of high intellectual art. Such impoverished minds talk with rapture of the interesting “characters” in these volumes of miserable fatuities; of some “charming young Montague,” or some “sweet Emma Montfort” (both more insipid than the “white of an egg”), who talk reams of soft nonsense, and get involved in absurd adventures which set all probability at defiance. You young ladies often melt into tears at maudlin scenes, which to a just perception or a masculine taste could only produce laughter; condescend to weigh the merits of slip-slop sentiment or descriptive platitudes beneath all criticism; and sagely compare the *power* of the three vols. of the inane

"Julia Montresor, or the Broken Heart," with the equally inane three vols. of "Pizarro, or the Bandit's Cave;" when the only question with any reader of sense (if any such reader could wade through the pages of either) is as to which of the two works is most utterly bankrupt in knowledge, taste, character, style, and in fact, every element that can redeem a work of fiction from being utterly contemptible and intolerable!

And this depravity of taste, believe me, may go on to any extent; for, as the appetite for reading such works becomes more and more voracious and indiscriminate, it leaves neither power nor inclination to appreciate better books. The mind at last becomes so vitiated that it craves and is satisfied with anything in the shape of a *story*, — a series of fictitious adventures, no matter how put together: no matter whether the events be probably conceived, the characters justly drawn, the descriptions true to nature, the dialogue spirited, or the contrary. So preposterous is the interest that may be taken in a mere train of fictitious incident, quite apart from the genius which has conceived or adorned it, that many a young lady will go through nearly the same story a thousand times in a thousand different novels, — the names alone being altered! I assure you it is an inscrutable mystery to me, my dear, how they can still endure that charming Miss — —, whom, under a hundred *aliases* they have already married to that sweet young gentleman with an equal number of names, in spite of the opposition of parents on both sides, dangerous rivals, and the most impossible hair-breadth "escapes by flood and field."

You will, perhaps, say, (what is very true,) that it is possible to get so entangled in a mesh of fictitious incidents, that though you know, or soon suspect, the novel to be unworthy of perusal, you do not like to lay it down till the

*denouement*. Do you ask how you may break the spell, and escape? Then I will tell you, provided you will promise to act on my advice. Read any such novel, my dear, Hebrew-fashion, that is, backwards; go at once to the end of the third volume — and marry off the hero and heroine, or drown them, or hang the one, and break the heart of the other, as may be most meet to you and the writer. If, after having thus secured your catastrophe, you cannot find heart to “plod your weary way” through the intervening desert of words, depend upon it you will lose nothing by throwing the book aside at once. And, further, you may take this also for a rule; — if you do not feel, as you read on, that what you read is worth reading for *its own sake*, — that you could read it over again with pleasure; — if you do not feel that the incidents are naturally conceived, the scenes vividly described, the dialogue dramatic and piquant, the characters sharply drawn, be sure the book is not worth sixpence. No fiction is, *intellectually*, worth anybody’s reading, that has not considerable merit as a work of art; and such works are ever felt to be worth reading again, often with increased interest. It is indeed the truest test of all the highest efforts of this kind; — new beauties steal out upon us on each perusal. Dip anywhere into the “Macbeth” of Shakespeare, or the “Antiquary” of Walter Scott, and you still find that, though you know the whole from beginning to end, the force of painting, the truth, yet originality of the sentiments, — the spirit of the dialogue, — the beauties of imagery and expression, — still lure you to read on, wherever you chance to open, with ever renewed delight.

Now let me add that if, for a little while, you never read any fiction but such as will bear to be often read, you will need no caution against any of an inferior kind. Your taste will soon become pure and elevated, and you will nauseate a bad novel as you would a dose of tartar emetic.

I shall ever feel grateful to the memory of Walter Scott. I happened to fall in with his best novels when quite a boy ; and I never could endure afterwards the ordinary run of this class of literature. When Laidlaw was acting as amanuensis to Scott in the composition of "Ivanhoe," he could not help congratulating the author on the happy effects which his beautiful fictions would have, by sweeping clean the circulating libraries of infinite rubbish. "Sir Walter Scott's eyes," he tells us, "filled with tears." And no doubt his fictions had considerable effect in elevating the taste of that novel-reading generation ; but a "new generation, which know not" Walter are being introduced to tons of the ephemeral current nonsense before they have the means of instituting a comparison. Be not you one of them. . . .

By the way, I may tell you that I fell in with "Ivanhoe," at thirteen, on a bright July morning in my midsummer holidays. I had been sent to the house of a relative, about a mile off, with some message, I forget what ; I found the family out ; but I found "Ivanhoe" at home — it was lying conveniently at hand ; I looked into it, became absorbed, and spent the whole day in the garden reading it, utterly forgetful of dinner, tea, and supper, and never stopped till I had finished it ! There are, among Scott's fictions, several I admire much more now, but none ever did me such service.

Ever your loving Uncle,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

July 16, 1846.

AND now, my dear Mary, I come to the second "head" of my discourse; so imagine yourself in church, and that your good clergyman is sending (as I doubt not he often does, you monkey) an admonitory glance towards your pew, as he arrives at the same critical stage in his sermon. My second "head," then, is to show that you may read too many even of the very best novels. "True," you will say "if I read *nothing* else." Aye, and very far within that limit may you read too many; let me add that *any* excess has a tendency to make you relish reading nothing else.

I have said that, in moderation, they are useful to develop and stimulate the imagination; but the imagination may be too much stimulated, and too much developed, — "developed" till it at length stunts all the other faculties, and "stimulated" till it is not exhilarated merely, but tipsy. The severer faculties demand a proportionate culture, and a more sedulous one; for to cultivate the imagination, in whatever degree it is susceptible of it at all, is the easiest thing in nature; the difficulty is to train it justly. Some hardy flowers will bloom in any soil, and with little or no culture — and so will those of fancy.

The greater part of your time should be given to solid studies or practical duties; this should be your rule. As relaxation, to be of any value, should be moderate, so novels must not claim much of your time. They should be the condiments and spices, the confectionary of your ordinary diet; not the substantial joints, not the *pièce de résistance*. You might as well attempt to live on creams and syllabubs.

But you will say, perhaps, "Is it possible to read a novel by chapter? Is it in human nature to leave off in the very middle of that critical adventure in which the hero saves the life of the heroine, or close the book just in the middle of his declaration, and without listening to the delicious lovers' nonsense which passes on that occasion, or finding out how it all ends?" To *me*, my dear, it would be very easy; or rather I should find a difficulty perhaps, in general, in *not* skipping — pray don't look so cross — all that same delicious nonsense. But I admit that it is difficult for many young ladies to do so; or for *any* novel reader, when the fiction has real merit; — to most young novel readers the task would be impossible.

And so, that you may not say I counsel you to perform "impossibilities," my dear, take my advice. Do not tie yourself to any such restriction as a chapter at a time. "O, delightful!" you will say. Stay a minute.

I would have you read novels only so moderately that there shall be no occasion for restricting yourself when you *do* read them. Let them be read now and then as a reward of strenuous exertion, or for having mastered some difficult book; or let them be reserved for visits and holidays. Do not, — if I may use a metaphor of that vulgar kind I have already so frequently employed, — do not have a novel *always in cut*. Keep it for an hour of well-earned leisure, or as a relief after arduous duty, and then read it without stint. This occasional full meal will then do you no harm; and, depend on it, the fare will be doubly delicious, from the keenness of the appetite, the previous fast, and the rarity of the indulgence. But you will say, "What shall I do for my daily hour or so of rightful mental relaxation, to which you admit I am entitled?" Well, if you will take my advice, you will ordinarily choose — and oh! the infinite treasures, which neither you nor I can fully exhaust, litera-

ture spreads before us! — something, which, while it fully answers the purpose of healthful and innocent mental amusement, will not hold attention too long enthralled, or lead you to turn to other less exciting compositions with a sigh. Take, for example, some beautiful poem; or a paper of one of our British Essayists; or an interesting book of travels; or an article of Macaulay, who, of almost all writers, combines, in greatest perfection, instruction and delight. The names of Milton, Gray, Cowper, Addison, Johnson, Crabbe, and a thousand more, show what a boundless field of selection lies before you.

And now do you want a *practical* rule as to when you have been reading novels (however good) too much or too long? Here, then, is an infallible one. When ordinary books of a sober and instructive character, are read with disrelish; when, for example, a work of well-written history seems to you, as compared with the piquant and vivid details of fiction, as if you were looking on the wrong side of a piece of tapestry; when you cannot away with dull, sober reality; when you return to practical duties with reluctance and the work-a-day world looks sombre and sad-colored to you, rest assured that you have been lingering too long in fairy-land, and indulging too much in day-dreams. And, further, remember this; — that as long as you are *liable* to any such unlucky consciousness, you have not carried the culture of your intellectual powers or your practical habits to the right point; for the moment *that* is done, such a result becomes impossible. A mind thus equipped for life and duty, *can* indulge in fiction only within certain moderate limits; for purposes of innocent unbending, of legitimate amusement. Beyond that point fiction cloy; and the healthy mind, so far from repining that it cannot live longer in the Fool's Paradise, — or, if you like not that harsh term, — among Elysian shadows, is conscious of as strong a desire

to come back to the regions of daylight and reality, as the inveterate novel reader feels to dream on in cloud-land. It sighs for a return to the substantial and the real; and can no more live in fiction than it can bear to be always dancing polkas, or playing eternally at back-gammon. Persevere for a certain time, — for the next two or three years, — I think you are now eighteen (you need not blush to acknowledge your age yet), — in disciplining your mind, and you are safe, I will answer for it, from the too dominant sway of any, even the greatest, enchanters of fiction. But my strongest reasons of all for the advice I am giving you, are yet behind, and I must reserve them for another letter.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XL.

TO THE SAME.

July 29, 1846.

MY DEAR MARY,

I now proceed to those “stronger” reasons to which I alluded in my last. I have reserved them for the close of my “sermon,” because they are the most important.

All inordinate indulgence in works of fiction, then, tends to pervert our views of life instead of enlarging them, which, if judiciously chosen, and read in moderation, they will do; and to quench benevolence, which, under similar restrictions, they will tend to cherish.

The excessive indulgence perverts, I say, views of life. The young mind is but too prone of itself to live in a world of fancy; indeed, in one sense, it is necessary that the imagination should thus be ever creating the future for us, or we should not act at all; but then its influence must be well regulated by a due regard to the laws of the *prob-*



*able*, or we shall lose the present and the future too: the present, in dreaming of an irrational future; and the future, because we have not prepared ourselves for any *possible* future by the proper employment of the present. If a young gentleman or young lady's mind, of any intelligence, could be laid bare, and all the fantastical illusions it has ever indulged exposed to the world, I am afraid it would fairly expire in an agony of shame at the disclosure; it would be often found, quite apart from novel reading, to have indulged largely in the veriest chimeras of hope and fancy. But then this tendency, difficult to control at the best, is apt to be fatally strengthened by undue indulgence in fictitious literature. If a too early love-affair and a circulating library should both concur to exasperate the malady, you may look for stark "mid-summer madness." — I fear that anticipations of unlooked-for windfalls of fortune, — of success achieved without toil, — of fame got for the longing after it, — of brides a few degrees above angels, and husbands in whom Apollo and Adonis are happily combined, — are a not uncommon result of dwelling too long in congenial fiction. Nor do I at all doubt that a thousand instances of failure in professional life of sudden and imprudent engagements, of ridiculous or ill-assorted matches, may be ascribed to the same cause. At all events, this pernicious practice prolongs and intensifies the natural tendency to day-dreaming. Had it not been for this, the spell would have been broken — the imaginative sleep-walker awakened by the rude shocks and jogs of practical life. But the dream and the walk are often continued too long, and the unhappy somnambulist vanishes — over a precipice!

But still more pernicious is the effect of this bad habit on *benevolence*. This may seem strange, but it is very true nevertheless. I grant that sympathy and sensibility depend in a very high degree on the activity of the imagination —

on our power of vividly picturing to ourselves the joys and sorrows of others; but do not hastily conclude that excess in reading fiction, provided that fiction be a just picture of life, (which I now assume,) can, whatever harm it may do in other directions, do none in this. It may quicken sympathy and strengthen sensibility, — nay, in one sense it will do so, — and yet, I stick to my paradox notwithstanding; namely, that it tends to weaken practical benevolence, and may end in quenching it altogether.

However, I must make the preliminary remark, that, even if the habit did not render benevolence less active, sensibility is of no value except as it is under the direction of judgment and reason; which presupposes, therefore, the harmonious culture of all the faculties and susceptibilities of our nature. Apart from a well balanced mind, neither prompt sympathy nor acute sensibility are of much value, and often only inspire visionary, whimsical, perhaps very sublime, but also very impracticable, projects.

But I would not have you ignorant, my dear, that the indulgence in question is liable to be attended with a much more serious evil than this. To be truly benevolent in heart, and strive to show it, even though the *mode* were so absurd as to prove that the heart had robbed the head of all its brains, would be something; — to be laughed at as an *idiotic angel* would still have some consolation. But the mischief is, that a morbid indulgence of sympathy and sensibility is but too likely to end in extinguishing benevolence. I imagine I hear you say, “Sensibility to distress, and sympathy with it, quench benevolence! this is, indeed, a hard lesson; who can hear it?” It is true notwithstanding; and as sympathy with distress, — *fictitious* distress, you understand, — and sensibility to it, increases, active benevolence may be in precisely inverse ratio.

If you ask *how* this can be, I answer, that it depends on

a curious law of our mental mechanism, which was pointed out by Bishop Butler,—with whose writings, by the bye, I hope you will be better acquainted some time within the next two years, and which will do you a world more good than a whole Bodleian library of novels. Among many other curious facts in man's moral anatomy, which the great philosopher lays bare, are these two,—which by the way show distinctly for what God designed us, and what course we ought to take in our own culture,—“That, *from our very faculty of habits*, passive impressions, *by being repeated*, grow weaker, and that practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated *acts*.”

But I find my sermon has been so long, that, like other preachers, I must, if I continue, huddle up the last, though most important part, in haste; therefore, as they sometimes do, I will reserve what I have to say for another discourse, begging you, my fair hearer, to ponder on the words I have just transcribed for you—if so be you may spell out their meaning, and profit thereby.

Yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLI

TO THE SAME.

Aug. 6, 1846.

MY DEAR MARY,

I resume the “thread” of my last discourse by expounding the seeming paradox with which it closed. “Who can be more tender-hearted,” perhaps you will say, “than heroes and heroines in novels, or more ready to *cry* than an inveterate novel reader?” Nevertheless be pleased to remember that however prompt the fancy may be to depict

distress, or the eye to attest the genuineness of the emotion that distress has awakened, they indicate what may be merely passive states of mind; and no benevolence is worth a farthing that does not proceed to action. Now, the frequent repetition of that species of emotion which fiction stimulates tends to prevent benevolence, because it is out of proportion to corresponding action; it is like that frequent "going over the theory of virtue in our own thoughts," which, as Butler says, so far from being auxiliary to it, may be obstructive of it.

As long as the balance is maintained between the stimulus given to *imagination* with the consequent *emotions*, on the one hand, and our *practical habits*, which those emotions are chiefly designed to form and strengthen, on the other, so long, I say, the stimulus of the imagination will *not* stand in the way of benevolence, but aid it; and, therefore, my dear, if you *will* read a novel *extra* now and then, impose upon yourself the corrective of an extra visit or two to the poor, the distressed, and afflicted! Keep a sort of debtor and creditor account of sentimental indulgence and practical benevolence. I do not care if your pocket-book contains some such memoranda as these: "For the sweet tears I shed over the romantic sorrows of Charlotte Devereux, sent three basins of gruel and a flannel petticoat to poor old Molly Brown;" "For sitting up three hours beyond the time over the 'Bandit's Bride,' gave half a crown to Betty Smith;" "My sentimental agonies over the pages of the 'Broken Heart' cost me three visits to the Orphan Asylum and two extra hours of Dorcas Society work;" "Two quarts of caudle to poor Johnson's wife and some gaberdines for his ragged children, on account of a good cry over the pathetic story of the 'Forsaken One.'"

But if the luxury — and it is a luxury, and in itself noth-

ing more — of sympathy and mere benevolent feeling be separated from *action*, then Butler's paradox becomes a terrible truth, and "the heart is not made better," but worse, by it.

And the following causes are peculiarly apt to render the *species* of emotion which fiction excites, not merely disproportionate to the habits of benevolence, but unfriendly to their formation. First; in order to make the representations of fictitious distress *pleasant*, — and that is the object of any fiction which depicts it, for it is a work of art, — there must be a careful exclusion of those repulsive features of distress which shock genuine sensibility and sympathy in real life. Poverty, and misfortune, and sickness are to be "interesting," captivating; the dirt, the filth, the vulgarity, the ingratitude, which real benevolence encounters in the attempt to relieve them, must be removed, not merely from the senses, but as far as possible from the imagination of the reader; no offensive *aura* must steal from the sick chamber where the faithful heroine suffers or watches, or from the chamber of death itself; none which even the fancy can detect; chloride of lime, and *eau de Cologne*, double-distilled of fancy, — must cleanse from the sweet pages every ill odor, lest the delicate reader that lies languidly on the sofa, wrapt in the luxury of woe, (perhaps with streaming eyes and frequent application of the fine cambric), should feel too acutely; — lest the refined *pleasure* thus cunningly extracted out of the sorrows of the world should turn to pain! Now the more this feeling is indulged, the more fastidious it becomes; till at last, if the *practice* of benevolence has not been in full proportion, the obstacles encountered by benevolence, when it attempts its proper task, become insurmountable, and its efforts are quenched at once. Accordingly, many a young lady has found, on her first attempt to visit the cabins of the poor,

and relieve the wants of the sick, that, as a great general declared "nothing was so unlike a battle as a review," so nothing is so unlike real benevolence as the luxurious semblance of it excited by a novel, and acted "with great applause" on the theatre of the imagination. So squeezmish may this feeling become, that even novels may depict scenes of sorrow, all too *real*. Even the *reflected* light of real life may be too strong for it. The fair reader, in danger of dying of "aromatic pain," cannot tolerate the vividness of this pre-Raphaelite style of literary painting! Perhaps as *art*, it ought not to be tolerated; for art ought to be confined within the limits which secure an overbalance of pleasure. But whether this be a correct canon of art or not, the moral effect of too much novel reading, (let the novels be ever so excellent as works of art,) is just what I say. It is apt to produce a fastidiousness, which cannot bear the *real*; no, nor even the faithful *delineation* of the real. Many a dear novel reader, one would imagine, supposes that the "*final* cause" (but one) of all the misery in the world, is to furnish the elements of the picturesque and the "interesting," the *raw material* for the fictitious painter, — and the "final cause" itself, the delicious luxury of that 'sentimental sympathy with which he inspires the elegant and fastidious reader!

Pleasurable sympathy with *fictitious* distress and benevolent desire to relieve *real*, differ infinitely. How picturesque some loathsome, squalid cabin, or a gipsies' tent often looks in a picture! "How prettily," we all say, "that little piece of humanity is introduced there!" yet how few would relish the thought of entering the reality! With what reluctance would they do it, even though benevolence bade! See there an illustration of the difference between sentimental emotion and benevolent principle.

The *luxury* of mere sympathy and sensibility, (now do not look so shocked,) of the “fine feelings” excited by fiction is, when disjoined from practical benevolence, so great, that it may actually form a notable element in a person’s daily felicity, and yet he may be one of the most selfish creatures in the world!

How delightful it is to sit still, and play, not only with no trouble, but with the liveliest pleasure, the part of great philanthropists! What ignorance and sorrow have been relieved—in fancy, by soft enthusiasts! What sums expended—without costing a farthing! What content and felicity diffused everywhere—and the ungrateful world none the better or the wiser for it all! Sentimental philanthropists, who thus revel in secret well-doing, transcend the Gospel maxim of not “letting their left hand know what their right hand doeth,” for they let neither their “right” nor their “left hand” know any thing of the matter! Out upon them!

Now, this selfish luxury not only blinds those who surrender themselves to it by the mask of seeming worth it wears, but by daily craving, like any other pleasant emotion, a more unrestrained indulgence, it makes real benevolence, and its hardy tasks, more and more impossible. And thus, as Bishop Butler justly says, the heart may be growing all the more selfish for all the *heroic* sacrifices of an imaginary virtue.

Pray observe too,—and it is well to remember it in the present tendencies of popular literature,—that similar effects, in the absence of a genuine practical benevolence, may be produced by an opposite class of delineations from those which exhibit fictitious distress: I mean those which exhibit almost exclusively the follies and weaknesses of mankind. When such descriptions are too often read,—no matter how kindly the vein of the hu-

morist,—the man who has not trained his heart to pity by actual benevolence is soon apt to fall into a cynical contempt of human infirmity, and to think that all the world's absurdities are game for laughter, when at least as often they call for compassion.

You may perhaps be still puzzled a little to reconcile the paradox of the *hardening* effects of excessive *sensibility*.—You will find all difficulty removed if you sufficiently meditate on the fact so beautifully pointed out by the great moralist I quoted in my last. So little (as he shows) is emotion,—even the best and most refined,—in itself any index of virtue, that emotion may be weakened, and indeed *is* so, by every practical advance in virtue. It is as he says, a great law of our nature, (and nothing can be more beautifully adapted to our condition as creatures who are designed for real practical virtue,) that while our passive emotions decay in vividness by repetition, (though it is true we *crave* them more and more strongly,) our practical habits *strengthen* by exercise; so that, as this writer observes, a man may be advancing in moral excellence by that very course which deadens his emotions. He, whose sensibility gloats over fictitious scenes of sorrow, as the exciting cause of agreeable *passive* sensations, is in the opposite position; he *craves* them more and more, though he feels them less vividly, just as is the case with the drunkard and his dram—he hankers for it more and enjoys it less. Practical habits, on the other hand, render emotion less vivid, but become more and more easy and pleasant—nay, like all habits, crave their wonted gratification. So true is it, however, that practical habit generally deadens passive impressions, that you may lay it down as a rule, that he who feels poignantly,—I do not say *deeply*, but poignantly,—the distress he relieves, is a novice in benev-



olence; and hence novel-reading young ladies and gentlemen often entirely mistake the matter, when they call a man hard-hearted only because he does not display all the sensations and clamorous sentiments of their own impotent benevolence, but just quietly *does* all that they talk of, and perhaps *blubber* about. We know that a benevolent medical man may take off a limb as coolly as he would eat his dinner, and yet feel ten times as much real sensibility for the sufferer as a fine lady who would run away, hide her face in her hands, and throw herself on a sofa in the most approved attitude for fainting or hysterics at the sight of even a drop of blood.

My dear Mary, take it as a caution through life, quite apart from the subject I have been preaching about;—Suspect,—I do not say condemn and hang,—but suspect all who indulge in superfluous expression of sentiment, all excessive *symbols* of sensibility. Those who indulge in these are always neophytes in virtue at the best; and, what is worse, they are very often among the most heartless of mankind. Sterne and Rousseau were types of this class,—perfect incarnations of sensibility without benevolence,—having, and having in perfection, the “form” of virtue, but “denying the power thereof.”

Your loving uncle,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLII.

TO THE SAME.

SUTTON, Oct. 12, 1846.

So you hope, my dear niece, that I shall soon send you another lecture on the “proprieties,” for that my lectures are very amusing! Upon my word you pay me a pretty

compliment, you monkey: you are as bad as the fashionable lady, who, having heard a very pathetic sermon on a very solemn text, was heard to remark, as she left the church, "Well, really we have had a very *entertaining* evening!"

Well, Mademoiselle, thanks to that little giddy pate of yours, I fancy there will be no lack of subjects whereon to admonish you. Your Mentor, believe me, will hold no sinecure. However, if I must lecture, hear me, — though speaking lightly, — on a very grave subject.

It is my purpose, my dear, to carry on your grammatical studies a little, by doing what I humbly venture to think your governess must have left partially undone, — I must indoctrinate you in the true theory and right use of "yes" and "no." Do not be alarmed; I am not about to trouble you with any tedious inquiry into the etymology or syntax of these important particles. These we leave to those whom it concerns; but as to the meaning and use of these atoms of speech, depend on it, they are of more importance than the meaning and use of the most centipedal polysyllables that crawl over the pages of Johnson's Dictionary.

You remember the last pleasant evening in my last visit to Shirley, when I accompanied you to the party at Mrs. Austin's. Something occurred there, which I had no opportunity of *improving* for your benefit. So as you invite reproof, — an invitation which, who that is mortal and a senior can refuse, — I will enlarge a little.

The good lady, our hostess, expressed, if you recollect, a fear that the light of the unshaded camphene was too bright, in the position in which you sat, for your eyes. Though I saw you blinking with positive pain, yet, out of a foolish timidity, you protested — "No, — oh no, — not at all!"

Now that was a very unneighborly act of the tongue, thus to set at naught the eye; the selfish thing must have forgotten that "if one member suffer, all the others must suffer with it." My dear, never sacrifice your eyes to any organ whatever; at all events not to the tongue, — least of all, when it does not tell the truth. Of the two, you had better be dumb than blind.

Now, if I had not interposed, and said that you ~~were~~ suffering, whether you knew it or not, you would have played the martyr all the evening to a sort of a — a — what shall I call it? — it must out, — a sort of fashionable fib! You may answer, perhaps, that you did not like to make a fuss, or seem squeamish, or discompose the company, and so, from timidity, you said "the thing that was not." Very true; but this is the very thing I want you to guard against; I want you to have such presence of mind that the thought of absolute Truth shall so preoccupy you as to defy surprise, and anticipate even the most hurried utterances.

The incident is very trifling in itself; I have noticed it, because I think I have observed, on other occasions, that from a certain timidity of character, and an amiable desire not to give trouble or "make a fuss," as you call it, (there, now, Mary, I am sure the medicine is nicely mixed — that spoonful of syrup ought to make it go down,) you have evinced a disposition to say, from pure want of thinking, what is not precise truth. Weigh well, my dear girl, and ever act on, that precept of the Great Master, which, like all His precepts, is of deepest import, and, in spirit, of the utmost generality of application, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay."

Let truth — absolute truth — take precedence of everything; let it be more precious to you than anything else. Sacrifice not a particle of it at the bidding of indolence,

vanity, interest, cowardice, or shame; least of all, to those tawdry idols of stuffed straw and feathers, — the idols of fashion and false honor.

It is often said that the great lesson for a young man or a young woman to learn is how to say "no." It would be better to say that they should learn aright how to use both "yes" and "no," — for both are equally liable to abuse.

The modes in which they are employed often give an infallible criterion of character.

Some say both so doubtfully and hesitatingly, drawing out each letter, "y-e-s," "n-o," that one might swear to their indecision of character at once. Others repeat them with such facility of assent or dissent, taking their tone from the previous question, that one is equally assured of the same conclusion, or, what is as bad, that they never reflect at all. They are a sort of parrots.

One very important observation is this, — be pleased to remember, my dear, that "yes" in itself always means "yes," and "no" always means "no."

I fancy you will smile at such a profound remark; nevertheless many act as if they never knew it, — both in uttering these monosyllables themselves, and in interpreting them as uttered by others. Young ladies, for example, when *the* question, as it is called, *par excellence*, (as if it were more important than the whole catechism together.) is put to them, often say "no," when they really mean "yes." It is a singular happiness for them that the young gentlemen to whom they reply in this contradictory sort of way have a similar incapacity of understanding "yes" and "no;" nay, a greater; for these last often persist in thinking "no" means "yes," even when it really means what it says.

"Pray, my dear," said a mamma to her daughter of

eighteen, "what was your cousin saying to you when I met you, blushing so, in the garden?"

"He told me that he loved me, mamma, and asked if I could love him."

"Upon my word! And what did you say to *him*, my dear?"

"I said, 'Yes,' mamma."

"My dear, how could you be so ——"

"Why, mamma, what else *could* I say? it was the — *truth*."

Now I consider this a model for all love-passages; and when it comes to your turn, my dear, pray follow this truth-loving young lady's example, and do not trust to your lover's powers of interpretation to translate a seeming "no" into a genuine "yes." He might be one of those simple, worthy folks who are so foolish as to think that a negative is really a negative!

I grant that there are a thousand conventional cases in which "yes" means "no," and "no" means "yes;" and they are so ridiculously common, that every one is supposed, in politeness, not to mean what he says, or rather is not doubted to mean the contrary of what he says. In fact, quite apart from positive lying, — that is, any intention to deceive, — the honest words are so often interchanged that if "no" were to prosecute "yes," and "yes" "no," for trespass, I know not which would have most causes in court. Have nothing to do with these absurd conventionalisms, my dear. "Let your yea be yea," and your "nay, nay." If you are asked whether you are cold, hungry, tired, — never, for fear of giving trouble, say the contrary of what you feel. Decline giving the trouble, if you like, by all means; but do not assign any false reason for so doing. These are trifles, you will say, and so they are; but

it is only by austere regard to truth, even in trifles, that we shall keep the love of it spotless and pure. "Take care of the pence" of truth, "and the pounds will take care of themselves."

Not only let your utterance be simple truth, as you apprehend it, — but let it be decisive and unambiguous, according to those apprehensions. Some persons speak as filteringly as if they thought the text I have cited, ran, "Let your yea be nay, and your nay, yea." And so they are apt to assent or dissent, according to the tenor of the last argument: "Yes — no" — "yes — no" — it is just like listening to the pendulum of a clock.

It is a great aggravation of the misuse of "yes" and "no," that the young are apt to lose all true apprehension of their meaning, and think, in certain cases, that "yes" cannot mean "yes," nor "no," "no."

I have known a lad, whose mother's "no" had generally ended in "yes," completely ruined because, when his father said "no" in reply to a request for unreasonable aid, and threatened to leave him to his own devices if he persisted in extravagance, could not believe that his father meant what he said, or could prevail on justice to turn nature out of doors. But his father meant "no," and stuck to it; and the lad was ruined, simply because, you see, he had not noticed that father and mother differed in their dialects, — that, in his father's, "no" always meant "no," and nothing else. You have read "Rob Roy," and may recollect that that amiable young gentleman, Mr. F. Osbaldestone, with less reason, very nearly made an equally fatal mistake; for every word his father had ever uttered, and every muscle in his face, every gesture, every step ought to have convinced him that his father always meant what he said.

In fine, my dear niece, learn to apply these little words

aright and honestly ; and, little though they be, you will keep the love of truth pure and unsullied.

Ah me ! what words of joy and sorrow — what maddening griefs and ecstasies — have these poor monosyllables conveyed ! More than any other words in all the dictionary have they enraptured or saddened the human heart ; rung out the peal of joy, or sounded the knell of hope. And yet not so often as at first sight might appear ; for these blunt and honest words are, both, kindly coy in scenes of agony. There are occasions, — and those the most terrible in life, — when the lips are fairly absolved from using them, and when, if the eye cannot express what the muffled tongue refuses to tell, the tongue seeks any stammering, compassionate circumlocution rather than utter the dreaded syllable. “Is there *no* hope ?” says the mother, hanging over her dying child, to the physician in whose looks are life and death. He dare not say “yes,” — but to such a question silence and dejection can alone say “no.”

May there be to you, dear Mary, not many scenes in life, — some there will, there must be, — when you cannot utter either of these monosyllables ; when truth will not let you say the one, and compassion will not let you breathe the other.

Believe me,

Ever yours affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLIII.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

SUTTON, October, 1847.

MY DEAR WEST,

. . . "The treatment of criminals," — a question on which you ask my opinion — is indeed a puzzling one. As to the plan of keeping them all in this country, — unless the most absolute necessity compels us, — it is the very worst of all; at least, if the wretches are to be turned loose, after a term of imprisonment, on a dense population and an often glutted labor-market: this is simply the most comprehensive cruelty both to the innocent and the guilty. The criminal thus turned out of jail, enfranchised with a pernicious freedom, cannot but relapse into crime. He *cannot* compete with honest poverty, unless the door of the counting-house and the factory be shut in its face in favor of the ticket of leave. Perhaps, here and there, one of our mad philanthropists would sacrifice unblemished worth to an absurd sympathy with guilt; but not one in ten thousand would; and, in nearly every case, the relapse of the criminal is inevitable.

The difficulties of the question almost force one on one of two courses; either a return, under some modifications, to strictly penal settlements — a horrible alternative! — or (what, in some moods, I have thought the truest mercy, not only to society, but to criminals themselves) the plan of making all the crimes of violence, — murder, highway robbery, burglary, arson, — inexpiable except by enslavement for *life*; the criminal to be employed all his days on public works, under a system of strict military law; the triangle and the platoon to be the prompt and instant avengers of every serious offence against discipline. Why,



indeed, at any rate, should the *criminal* code be milder than that of the camp?

I have sometimes fancied that such a chastisement of every deliberate forfeiture (by commission of crimes of *violence*) of the protection of society, would do more than anything else to prevent them. If every one disposed to invade his neighbor's liberty, saw over every prison door Dante's terrible inscription, —

“Abandon hope, all ye who enter here,” —

I am inclined to think few crimes of violence would be deliberately committed.

But it is a question of immense difficulty. I remember, some years ago, reading all that Bentham — all that Beccaria — all that others have said on the treatment of criminals, and thought it incomparably the most perplexing problem in political science.

If we *could* but give ourselves wholly to one of the two great aims of penal legislation, — the *prevention* of crime, — and leave the reformation of the criminal quite out of sight; if we could but make that which is the principal, the sole object, and apply to crime remorselessly the maxim, “Experimentum fiat in corpore vili,” — I fancy the most awful punishment and the most effectual *deterrent* of crime would be just to let it have its play among those who had been tainted by it; to select for example, some island in the deep recesses of the ocean, — of sufficient fertility, and no more, to yield a scanty subsistence to its inhabitants, if they chose to work the stubborn glebe, — and then put ashore there every one who had committed certain heinous crimes, and let them do their best or worst; the Government simply keeping a port, and cruisers who should see to it that none ever escaped from that dreadful prison; but never interfering to prevent any ill consequences of this

concentration of evil; to stay any tumult, to redress any wrongs, to punish any cruelties in this region of huge misrule.

You will think, perhaps, that sheer necessity, — the necessity which exacts “honor” (such as it is) “among thieves,” would lead on to *some* sort of government; and it doubtless would, for extermination would be the result if the principles of evil had unchecked sway. But of all despotisms or republics the world has yet seen, I suppose this would be incomparably the worst; in which truth and justice would be recognized only so far as they were reluctantly felt to be necessary to the very existence of the body politic, — a striking homage, by the way, even *that*, to the moral constitution of the universe; for it proves that even when men have discarded virtue itself, they must still wear the semblance of it. But still, what dreadful excesses, within the limits of “thieves’ honor” would evil passions give birth to! Who can imagine the horrors of a community of lust, cruelty, cunning, greed, blasphemy, — a community in which hope and shame would be dead; where the heaviest woe of all would be that very tyranny — that “Right of Might” — which yet would be the only thing which could keep such a society from extinction; where he of the Red Right-hand might be king; the makers of law those who had been most famed for breaking it; in which a murderer might be chancellor, and every judge a felon!

But most probably there could be no stable government even of this horrible kind; a succession of brief anarchies would form the crimson annals, diversified only by the momentary pre-eminence of some superior fiend, — “Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, casting out devils.” In short, the picture is too dreadful to dwell on; humanity shudders at the thought of it; so we must give up this promising speculation; we have no business thus to antedate Hell.

Yes — Hell. For to be evil, and to be abandoned to evil; to live in the midst of those whose countenances reflect only evil passions, stamped with cruelty, lust, cunning, malice; and to feel (most dreadful of all) that *their* countenances are but the mirrors of our own; that we are free to “work all manner of evil” against one another, which the utmost selfishness, armed with cunning, unchecked by conscience, and checked only by fear, can inflict; what, after all, is that but hell? Did you ever read Sir James Mackintosh’s description of the feelings with which he once found himself standing alone amongst the felons of Newgate, on a casual visit of compassion to that prison? As he saw around him the multiplied images of depravity, — every variety of expression of hatred, malignity, cruelty, lust, cunning, — he confesses to a feeling of the most sickening horror and dread. It must have been hardly better than standing alone in the serpents’ house in the Zoological Gardens, without anything between the reptiles and the spectator, and — the doors locked!

But to return. If, I say, it were not for humanity, such a “habitation of dragons” as I have supposed would, surely, be the true thing to deter men from crime, and maintain in them a wholesome fear of coming into such a place of torment. How would its very mystery of veiled horrors strike the imagination; — that land of silence of which no tongue could tell anything, — on which the foot of innocence had never trod, from which that of guilt never returned; — that land for ever divided from the living world, as much as if the grave had already closed on its weary inhabitants! Who can tell what wholesome affrighting myths — what salutary appalling tales — would shape themselves out of the hints and whispers of those who had only gazed on the melancholy isle! How would the voyagers who but sailed in view of the “unblessed land” trans-



one salutary thought of the horror of going into any resembling world! . . . .

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLIV.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

INVERARY, July, 1848.

MY DEAR MASON,

I think if you had been with us yesterday, you would have been amused, — not to say instructed, — by the illusions of a harmless sort of madman, who — be not shocked — turned out to be an intimate friend of the “de’il.”

I was seated in company with a young stranger, on a stone bench in front of a little inn on my way here, lazily looking out on the sunny mountains, when a man, decently dressed as to the materials, though rather fantastically as to the colors, sat down beside me; and the mutter of his lips, his restless air, and the bright but wandering eye, convinced me that he was “no just that right in his mind.” He was a Scotchman, who, like so many of his countrymen, had received in his youth an education much beyond that of a similar class in our own country; and seemed to have lost none of his native shrewdness under the influence of his malady. After sitting for a few minutes, twitching his features, muttering his “wayward fancies,” stealing rapid glances at me, shifting his limbs in incessant restlessness, he suddenly turned, and, with that mysterious confidential undertone in which a maniac loves to utter his absurdities, and which renders them so fearful to the listener, said “Did ye e’er see the de’il, mon?”

"I do not know that I have ever *seen* him," said I.

"*I* have, then," said he, with much such an air of superiority as a vulgar tuft-hunter might have assumed in claiming acquaintance with my Lord Duldram; (nodding his head and compressing his lips at the same time,) "I have, then," said he; "mony's the fine crack we hae had thegither; amaist always by night, ye ken," he added, with a mysterious air; "he dinna bide a blink of the sun, I'm thinking."

"Why," said my young stranger-companion, who seemed to know something of the madman, "they say, Dandie, that there was never such a thing as the de'il!"

"Ah! are ye there now, mon?" said the madman, in high dudgeon. "He kens *you*, mon, better than ye ken him. He was a gay gude preacher as once said to a daft young fule like you, 'Ye're an undutifu' laddie to deny your ain father.' If ye dinna ken him yet, ye will, mon, ye will if ye live; or if you dinna live, ye'll ken him still better, I'm thinking."

Madman you may be, thought I; but, like many more of your brotherhood, you have a sharp humor of your own.

"Well, but," said I, wishing to humor his illusion, and desiring I fear, — Heaven forgive me! — to derive a little amusement from it; at the same time anxious to prevent the passion into which it was evident the thoughtlessness of the youth might plunge him by wanton contradiction, — "Well, but Dandie, have you never seen him by day?"

"To be sure, I have," said he with an air of superiority; "though not sae often as by night, — *that* I canna gainsay. And when I hae seen him by day, it is mostly in the shadow of yon pine wood, which you can just see frae this, in a dark glen where the stream comes tumbling down, and sounds awsome in the gloaming. I hae whiles met him there, and had a wee crack wi' him; but he does na

seem that cheerful and franklike as in the bonny starlight."

"Pooh!" said the young man, who seemed to take a delight in teasing him; "you've seen some madman wandering there, Dandie, and have mistaken him for the de'il; that's all."

"Begging your pardon, then, Mr. Mac Donald, the de'il's nae mair wud than *I* am;" little thinking of the compliment he was paying his patron.

"Well, but," said I, "did you ever see him in the broad daylight?"

"Ance I did," said the maniac, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper; "but, eh! sirs, it's a sair sight that; I wadna see it again. Ye maun ken we were walking a wee bit out of the shade of the wood on a stormy day, and just then the sun glinted frae between the clouds in a bright light; but it wasna to shine on him, or he wadna be shone upon by it; a dark shadow fell in a ring all about him, and in that shadow I seemed to feel as cauld as I would under the northern peak of Ben Cruachan yonder!"

"And has he," said I, "the claws and hoof usually given to him?"

"Na, na," replied this enlightened gentleman, — "that is just vulgar superstition, mon. He is as weel favored a gentleman, — dressed in black, though, ye ken, like a clergyman, for he aye likes seeming, — as *I* am."

"But," said I, soothingly, "did you never use your privilege to tell him that some of the young folks of our acquaintance doubt his existence altogether?"

"That have I," said he; "and it's amaisht the only time I ever saw a giggle on his face. 'Aye, aye,' says he, 'that is just what I tell them mysel, and they speak as I bid them, puir unconscious fules! It's at times ane o' my delights now to hear them saying there is na sic thing as the

de'il, while I am just at their elbows, and hae put that vera lie into their mouths. But it is na aften that I am at the pains; for the greater part of mankind are sic fules that they are equally deceived, though they *do* believe that there is a de'il!' Eh! but," said the madman, "the de'il spak truth there, ony way. Oh! but it's sad to see that man will throw away life, weal, wife, childer, heaven, and a' for a gill o' whiskey or a bit rag o' painted harlotry. They say the de'il is very busy in tempting men; but he maun hae an easy time o't, I'm thinking. All of them meet him mair than half-way. Ilk ane seems to gang to him, and say—'Hae na ye some dainty temptation for me to-day, now, Daddie Satan? I'm sair wracked for a coaxing temptation.'"

"Well, but," said I, "Dandie, have you never expostulated with him on the cruelty of his conduct, and asked him what pleasure he can have in inflicting tortures on the miserable victims of his arts? You remember what your countryman Burns says in his address to the de'il—

"I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie ye —"

"Hoot, mon," broke in the madman; "Rob was a fine poet—puir fellow—nae doot o' that; but I'm thinking he was na always in his right senses; when the whisky was *in*, the brains were *out*, ye ken; and I'm sure he was never sae weel acquaint wi' auld Cloodie as I am, puir blinded mon!"—he continued, as if his intimacy was a singular privilege.

"But," said I, recalling him, "about his cruelty, now—did ye never expostulate with him? I really think, that, as a good man, you should. Who knows what you might do with him?"

"I kenna," said he, sagely shaking his head; "he's a dour carl to persuade to onything; and, after a', how does



he do waur than mony a king and great captain, who slay, and hang, and burn thousands upon thousands to slake their pride and vain-glory?"

"But the cruelty of tormenting men," said I —

"And how do ye ken it is just cruelty?" said this devil's advocate, "ony mair than it's just cruelty that makes kings and captains cut throats, and burn towns and villages. It's, may be, just the luv o' *power*, — and what for suld na Satan be as fond of a braw kingdom as a man?"

Here our curious colloquy closed; for his last answer set me musing. Yes, thought I, this madman has unwittingly replied to one of the favorite arguments for the devil's non-existence, — the supposition of gratuitous and motiveless malignity. Why should there not be, as the solemn intimations of the Scripture seem to show us, a greater than even the greatest of evil men, fighting for empire, for the gratification of pride, ambition, and "immortal hate?" And how is his conduct, on that supposition, more inexplicable than that of the petty conquerors among men, who, with less potent means, do mischief from the same motives? who, as my madman said, burn, and slay, and hang, and cut the throats of thousands — for power? Can even the devil do more than those who cry "havoc!" and wantonly "let slip the dogs of war," for ambition's sake? who know that the burning roof-tree, fathers murdered on their own hearth, and weeping captives, and smoking harvests, are among the "*incidents*" of conquest?

And if it be said, as sciolists are so apt to say, that God, with His omnipotence, would not let such a being as the devil play such pranks as are attributed to him, in His universe, — alas! the question returns — May He not, for reasons unknown to us, permit it, — since, for reasons

equally unknown, He has suffered so many incarnate demons to lay waste and desolate this fair world of ours? . . .

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLV.

TO ———

Near BRODICK, ARRAN, Aug. 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am living here in absolute solitude, but in the midst of the most delightful mountain scenery you can imagine. I am "located," at a little farm-house of the most primitive Highland simplicity, in two tiny rooms about twelve feet by fifteen, and lighted by windows two feet square. I have just sufficient books to fill a little mantel-piece; and on wet days, they and my pen form my only resources. But I live on the banks of *such* a mountain stream, and at the entrance of *such* a glen,—why, it is like stepping out of an Indian wigwam into Paradise, the moment I cross the threshold. This reconciles me to my lot, and to the absolute loss of society; for I hardly reckon my old host and hostess to be any. We seldom exchange more than five words at a time, and they are not such as to invite more.

I know not how it is that I have got the character of a very merry, sociable sort of person; for few people enjoy solitude more than I do, or have had more of it. I suppose it is because, going seldom into society, I enjoy it with all the more gusto from my customary hermit's life. Never was there a character, however, worse bestowed; for I fear there has seldom been a man more sombre, or that, on an average, has smiled or laughed less.

Such is the force of habit, nevertheless, that I cannot recollect that I ever left any company, however congenial and however merry, and felt solitude irksome; my quiet study, those silent friends, my books, have never seemed unwelcome. I believe I have spent more hours alone than any man of my acquaintance, or perhaps than any man who has not been condemned to solitary imprisonment for life; and yet, such is habit, that sometimes, and for many days together, I feel as if I could bear never to see again a "human face divine;"—certainly could dispense with seeing my own. Yet neither philosophy nor religion assent to this morose life: not philosophy, for I should be forced to light my own fire and cook my own mutton; nor religion, for the Allwise himself has said, what all experience confirms, "that it is not good for man to be alone."

And yet Adam, I sometimes fancy, half doubted this truth by the time Eve had been in Paradise a few days and made the serpent a morning call. I rather think he heartily wished he was munching his solitary peaches again.

A few days! why, some of the schoolmen doubted whether Eve remained in Paradise a single day before she committed the *faux pas*; and they said so, I fancy, from sheer difficulty of imagining that a lady's frailty could hold out longer. But commentators were always an ungallant and churlish set. For my part, I confidently believe that Eve held out much longer;—three whole days, at the very least.

One wonders what would have been the condition of the world, if little Eve had eaten, and Adam ~~had~~ not; if he had politely handed her ladyship to the side door in the wall of Paradise; told her that "separate maintenance" would be her lot on the other side, amongst the

“thorns and thistles;” and so fairly turned the key upon her. If he had been as brutal a husband as a good many of his descendants, I can imagine him returning to his spade and dibble with great *sang froid*, without even throwing the poor creature a few apples over the wall.

But as it was — alas! the story reads profoundly *natural*, whether in the book of Genesis or Milton’s Epic. For Eve, Adam “lost the world, and was content to lose it;” what an Antony and Cleopatra! “All for love, and the world well lost!”

I fancy I hear some dubious lady say, “Who can doubt that the gentleman had a ‘wee bit’ of curiosity as well as Eve, and a sweet tooth of his own in his head?”

Well, be it so; but there is profound nature in the tumult of sympathy with which Milton represents him as acting:

. . . . “with thee,  
 Certain my resolution is to die;  
 How can I live without thee, how forego  
 Thy sweet converse, and love so dearly joined,  
 To live again in these wild woods forlorn!”

Well might Eve be ravished by the compliment by which Paradise was forfeited and a world undone,—

“O glorious trial of exceeding love.” . . .

No doubt, like all of us millions of fools of Adam’s sons, who have acted with similar folly to his own when we have yielded to temptation, Adam went as “an ox to the slaughter,”—without *thinking*; but then that *not* thinking,—alas! it is his and our crime.—Not less profoundly true to human nature is Milton’s description, a little after, of the recrimination that ensues; and most of all, that which is given in Genesis. Any thing, it seems, rather than take a fault to ourselves! “The woman

whom thou gavest me ;” — so that Adam upbraids God with His own gifts, as we all do when we have made a bad use of them. “The serpent beguiled me,” says Eve ; and I dare say if the serpent had been asked, he, too, would have said, that it was God’s own fault for having put the “tree” in his way.

Any thing, — the woman, — the child, — the devil, — God himself, rather than man will ingenuously confess himself in the wrong !

But I have been running on, and have not answered your question respecting the best way, not *out of*, but *into* this Scotch paradise. Tell your nephew to take the steamer from Liverpool, — go up to Greenock, and he will find Clyde steamers hither twice a day : *which* is to be taken, will depend on the time of his arrival in the Clyde.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLVI.

TO THE SAME.

ARRAN, Aug. 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I little thought my late *badinage* was to elicit from you so serious an expression of *doubts*, or I should have shrunk as much from writing in so playful a strain as from lighting a squib over a barrel of gunpowder. However, I will do my best, as you desire, to reply ; so a truce to all nonsense for the present.

It seems to me that you have been a little touched with the malaria of “Rationalism” — the neological Epidemic,

so widely spread in our day. You have taken it mildly; but be assured that the *virus* is in your constitution, and may lead to more formidable symptoms, and a worse type of the disease; for there is, as I shall try to show you, no consistency — no *principle* — in your objections. You might as well carry them a thousand leagues further, and reject not only *what* you say you are inclined to reject, but every shred of the supernatural in the Bible history; nor stop there, but go on, if your logic be but consistent, to Atheism itself. I speak seriously; and though I am not in the habit of speaking defiantly, I *do* challenge you to justify yourself against the arguments which I shall employ against you.

You tell me frankly that you have no difficulty in receiving the Bible, *generally*, as a divine revelation; nor in admitting its history to be, *generally*, authentic, and its miracles, facts; but you ask — how can you receive “demonstrable discrepancies” and “grossly improbable legends” as true? counting among these last, it seems, the literal history of the Temptation and Fall, — the history of Balaam’s ass, — and the history of Jonah.

Now, at the outset, I must beg you to distinguish between things that differ, and differ *toto cælo*, — *discrepancies* in statement, and seeming improbabilities in the history. You speak of them as if they were to be treated alike.

As to those *discrepancies* which you say are “*demonstrably* contradictions,” — if there *are* any such, do as you please — I ask no man to believe “demonstrable contradictions;” only be sure they *are* so: for my part, I hesitate to say it. — I know of none such *as yet*; and I say so for these reasons: 1. I have seen so many of the alleged “demonstrable contradictions” reconciled, that I am rather chary of belief in them; and, with regard to those still unresolved, am willing to wait with patience for further light before

pronouncing absolutely. 2. I know that many "discrepancies" may be expected, without at all touching the original claims of the writers to inspiration, — since, unless God has wrought multitudinous miracles every day on all the transcribers' pens and fingers, many *must* have crept into the text. 3. I see that a great part of the remainder, (which cannot be so accounted for,) may be fairly set aside, if we bear in mind that circumstances may be omitted in the narrative, which if we but knew them, would prove the alleged discrepancies *apparent* only; and indeed, such circumstances in by far the greater number of cases, may be imagined as *will* reconcile them. I know it is the fashion of a certain sort of critics, as blind as owls, to say that such criticism is conjectural only; but conjectural or not, they forget, that where a contradiction is asserted between two statements, the mere showing that it is *possible* they may both be true, is sufficient, (with anybody who has five grains of logic,) to neutralize *that*. If A swears that he has seen B in Manchester at twelve o'clock, and C that he saw him walking about the fields forty miles off an hour or so after, it is quite enough to neutralize the apparent discrepancy, if it be shown that B might have got there by an express train within the specified time, — though no proof whatever were offered, or to be found, that that *is* the mode of reconciling the statements. 4. Though I admit there ~~may~~ be cases where I can suggest no solution whatever, I ~~prefer~~ <sup>prefer</sup> waiting for further light before pronouncing them absolutely insoluble; for it may be that they may turn out errors of transcription, and not of the original documents. However, we are at all events agreed that the discrepancies, which can at all be supposed "contradictions," are, as any candid sifting of them will show, few, turn on ~~trivial~~ points, and are utterly insignificant compared with the weight of evidence which converges to the conclusion that the Bible, as a whole, came

from God ; so that even if they be supposed errors of the original writers, — permitted for some unknown reason, perhaps to teach them and us humility, and committed in momentary obscuration of the preternatural light with which they were generally favored, — the passages in which such errors occur may be rejected with no perceptible deduction from the result. “I know not,” says Paley, “a more rash or unphilosophical conduct of the understanding, than to reject the substance of a story, by reason of some diversity of the circumstances with which it is related. When accounts of a transaction come from the mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to pick out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges.”

And I know you will also agree that, if we dismiss the hypothesis of the superhuman origin of the Bible in general, and suppose the Book a collection of merely human records, it is a far more puzzling thing that so few discrepancies should exist than that some should ; it is far more difficult to account for its wonderful harmony, — for the paucity and insignificance of the discrepancies found in it, — than to suppose a few permitted to exist, on the theory of its divine origin, as the result of our ignorance of omitted facts or the accidents of transmission ; nay, I can imagine some discrepancies permitted for many other reasons ; but no causes, known or unknown, will account for the unity of the Bible on the theory of a human origin. Considering that it is a collection of nearly seventy *tracts* — written by at least thirty authors, — extending over some thousands of years in time, — composed in different languages, — full of the minutest historic details, — it is incomprehensible to me that it should exhibit such an astonishing approach to har-



mony, and that the “discrepancies” to which a searching criticism has reduced the objections of infidelity, should be so few, on the supposition that no superhuman wisdom presided over its composition and compilation.

But these discrepancies, — few or many, (which you are called on, however, to “demonstrate” to be *contradictions*, before you can reject the portions of the Bible in which they are found,) — stand on a totally different footing from those “improbabilities” (as you call them) in the history, which, as presumed to be marked by “legendary or mythical” characteristics, you *also* make a stumbling block. Forgive me if I say that here I entirely miss your ordinary good sense, and I am sure that your objections have not a particle of sound logic in them. Why I speak thus strongly, I will tell you in another letter.

Yours ever faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLVII.

TO THE SAME.

ARRAN, N. B., Aug. 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The reason which induced me to speak so emphatically at the close of my last is, that I can discern no one *principle*, nor shadow of a principle, on which you accept and reject the “preternatural.” You say you believe the story of Daniel’s being thrown into the lions’ den, and his getting safe out of it; but *not* the story of Jonah being swallowed by the great fish, and getting safe out of *that*: you believe in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being cast into the fiery furnace, and coming forth without the smell of fire upon them; but *not* the story of the serpent speaking to Eve:

you believe the manifestations of God in human form to Abraham at Mamre, and of His appearance in the form of an angel to Joshua in the plains of Jericho, and are not even disturbed by the phenomenon of the “drawn sword;” but you do not believe that He ever appeared as an angel “wrestling” with Jacob! Now, why, in the name of wonder, do you believe and disbelieve thus capriciously? What *principle* guides you in these seemingly random selections and rejections? I can imagine, indeed, two courses, either of which would be *consistent* enough, — though not equally justified by the evidence; but *your* course is to me utterly unintelligible. 1. I can imagine a man saying, “I reject all miracles, not perhaps as *impossible*, but as so eminently *improbable* that no strength of external evidence can establish them; and, therefore, I reject *all* those things just enumerated, and everything else like them; everything that breaks in upon my little jog-trot of familiar ‘antecedents and consequents.’” This man, as we shall shortly see, ought, in sound logic, to go a little further, — but, so far, he is at least consistent. 2. Another man may say, “I believe not only that supernatural facts may occur, but that they can be proved to have occurred by appropriate evidence; I believe that evidence to have been given in relation to the Scriptural narratives of that kind; all of them, therefore, that I see supported *by the same degree of external evidence*, I equally believe; for I *am* a judge of the evidence in their support, and of its equality in the different cases; but, admitting the supernatural to have occurred at all, I am no judge in the world as to the *modes* in which God may have permitted it to appear. He alone is the adequate judge of the degree and forms in which He shall exhibit it.”

I can imagine, as I have said, the first of these two men (still consistently) going a step further, and saying, “I reject all supernatural occurrences as infractions of my little

familiar series of 'antecedents and consequents,' and therefore reject all of that nature that appears in the Bible; I cannot conceive, with some halting reasoners, one of these events to be, *à priori*, at all more probable than another; it seems just as unlikely that Christ should have recalled a little girl of twelve to life the instant after death had done its work, or turned water into wine, or fed five thousand by five barley loaves and a few fishes, as that Balaam's ass should have rebuked his master, or the young prophet's axe-head float; — so, further still, — nothing can appear a more startling infraction of my snug little experience than that a *first* man should ever have sprung 'out of the dust,' or been 'developed' out of a 'tadpole;' or, still more incredible, that there should ever have been a time when my familiar system of 'antecedents and consequents' was non-existent altogether. I therefore come to the conclusion that it *never* began, — that 'men' and 'tadpoles' are, alike, eternal series, — and that the Truth is to be found only in — Atheism!"

But as for *you*, what can you or any such inconsistent dabbler in Rationalism say? I know not — except this one thing: "I admit that there is nothing wonderful in miracles — for I admit scores; I admit that it is quite 'natural' that, in a 'supernatural' system, the supernatural should be *expected*, and that does not trouble me in the least; but I *am* a judge, from my *à priori* conceptions, — my tastes, my fancy (even where the external evidences are just the same), — as to how far God would permit the 'supernatural' to appear, and in what forms; and therefore I decide, from a certain feeling of intrinsic propriety (a caprice of fancy, I should call it), that God may have let Daniel escape out of the lions' den, but would never have let Jonah slip down the fish's gullet; that He may have saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, though they were thrown into the

fiery furnace, but that it is totally inconceivable that He should let Balaam's ass speak good sense!" My dear friend, you really have nothing to go upon here, but certain *à priori* conceptions and feelings of what God is *likely* to do:—of which neither you nor I can judge.

This is, however, the *πρωτον ψεῦδος*—the floating Delos of all Rationalism; and you see, by experience, that it is utterly unstable. You see a thousand different men arriving at a thousand different conclusions, as to how much they shall admit! In this impossible winnowing of the contents of Scripture by their *à priori* winnowing-fan, some admit more than you do, —some less; —some almost all the Bible, —some hardly any; all measure it with that one deceitful, variable bushel of theirs. They think that, though the external evidence for supernatural facts may be the same in several cases, they yet are justified neither in rejecting all, nor accepting all, (whereas there is no other way out of the dilemma,) but that they may judge it certain God would do *this*, and would not do *that*. This is a parallel folly with the famous *à priori* criticism which, in Germany, has led to such ludicrously variable results in profane literature, and results still more ludicrous (if they were not so serious) in sacred.

If you say, "Well; must I receive every fable that professes to be 'supernatural,' because I am no judge of what it is probable that God will do or permit?"—I have abundantly answered that. You are not to receive *any* supernatural history, unless you have appropriate evidence for it; but if you have it for nine facts you admit, and *also* for a tenth you reject, you are utterly illogical in rejecting that tenth in virtue of any such fantastical criterion as the *à priori* human view of the probable in God's administration of the universe: you need omniscience and infallibility to guide you.

But if you really think you can trust any such discerning "spirit" within you, be pleased at least, to let it speak impartially. If you do, I rather fancy you will reject more than half the facts in the constitution of the world around you, in spite of the general evidence for Theism; for how few of them, viewed in their entire relations, are such as man's *à priori* wisdom would have conjectured! As I said of the consistent objector to *all* supernatural facts, that he must, if he carry his principles fairly out, ultimately become an Atheist, so he who rejects certain things because he thinks them *unlikely* to be done or permitted by the Deity, must reject no inconsiderable part of the most notorious phenomena as having originated with Him or as having any sanction of His. Nay, that such a world as this should have been created at all, — that so many mysteries of sorrow should have been permitted to overshadow it, — that such a bundle of absurdity and misery as man should ever have been permitted to crawl upon it, — that the development and education of an immortal spirit should have been involved in all the humiliating and perilous conditions of such a material existence as ours, (to say nothing of the infinite anomalies in this world's administration,) — seem, looked at *à priori*, as unlikely as any of those things you make such wry faces at swallowing. Nor is there anything that leads the pseudo-philosopher to think otherwise, except that most foolish of all sophisms, which the philosopher above all men ought to be ever on his guard against, — namely, that *the things we happen to be accustomed to are to be ruled not at all mysterious, while everything else is!* But, depend on it, that the inhabitants of a differently and more happily constituted world than ours, would, unless they were much better philosophers than we are, account the phenomena of this planet (if they were faithfully related

to them) much more calculated to pose belief and provoke scepticism, than the stories of Jonah's Fish and Balaam's Ass!

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLVIII.

TO THE SAME.

ARRAN, Aug, 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will see that I have hitherto said nothing as to the two specific instances which you incidentally gave as specimens of what I call your incipient "Rationalism," and which led to the last two letters. I thought it much more important to argue against the general principle,—or rather the want of any,—which seems to me to lie at the basis of your doubts; an "ignis fatuus," which, if you take not the better heed, may lead you a pretty dance before it disappears,—or, more probably, will cause you to disappear, before itself vanishes, in some enormous boghole of the great quagmire of Rationalism over which it flickers.

Of what I have hitherto said, this is the sum;—Judge impartially of evidence, and do not weigh it in "a false balance." If you doubt whether the same external evidence *does* apply to two facts, one of which you reject, and the other you accept,—that is another thing; fight as long as you will—that is, as long as you rationally can—about *that*. The authority, for example, of a particular chapter may be disputed; but if, as you allow, the external evidence for the literal truth of Jonah's or Balaam's history, is as strong as that for Daniel's or Pharaoh's, I see not, I confess, anything but caprice, (which may and does assume a thousand different shapes in different minds,) in accepting

the one as historic truth, and rejecting the other as fabulous nonsense !

And now a word or two as to your two instances. First, you say the "Temptation," even putting out of sight the *preternatural* about the transaction, (the objection to *that* must depend on the validity of the general principle already considered,) seems to you incomprehensible; that the "command," which was to constitute the probation of our first parents, was "trivial," "non-moral," and "arbitrary." As to its being "trivial," be pleased to observe that, if so, it was all the more easy to be obeyed; and that, *therefore*, it illustrates rather the moderation than the rigor of the Imposer. Would Adam have been better pleased if it had been harder? Would not his posterity then have said that the test of obedience was too difficult, as they now say it was too "trivial?"

As to its being "non-moral," you must reflect that anything, though in its own nature indifferent, becomes moral in its obligation, if imposed by the rightful authority. Though not a duty in itself, an indifferent action becomes so, if the will of a legitimate Master impose its performance; yes—though it were only a command to brush the dust off our shoes, never to shave the beard, or always wear a wig. Above all, the will of the Creator is "supreme law" to every *rational* creature; and such a creature will make no more objection to fulfil His *arbitrary* commands, when the idea of His authority is thus superinduced *upon* them, than those commands, the essential moral character of which is seen to be diffused *through* them.

As to its being "arbitrary," I doubt whether you have ever sufficiently reflected on the real nature of the problem. I think you forget that, in Adam's condition, an "arbitrary" command (as you call it) was a more appropriate test of obedience than what *you* would call a "moral" com-

mand. This subject, if I mistake not, is judiciously touched in some part of Butler's "Analogy." At all events, what we now ordinarily call a "moral" command would have insufficiently tested the absolute obedience of one whose whole original condition is represented as such, that no moral command could have involved any great temptation to disobey. Imagine a being, all whose faculties are as yet in harmony and equilibrium;—who does not know what "evil" is;—in blissful ignorance of the conflict of the Passions and the Reason, the Appetites and the Conscience;—whose outward condition is that of perfect health and exemption from all want;—pray, which of the commands of the Decalogue would seem very formidable to *him*?

I remember hearing of an Irish lecturer, who supposed these commands addressed by an angel to an Irish Adam. The answers were given, I was told, in a truly Irish manner; yet, I think, very naturally. As I did not hear the lecturer myself, I cannot precisely report the Irish Adam's answers; nor can I imitate the true Paradisaic "brogue;" but I believe they would very reasonably run something like this:—

*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

"Arrah, thin, your honor; I never as much as heard of any other at all at all."

*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor the likeness of anything, to bow down thereunto, to worship.*

"Why, thin, plase your honor's glory, I cannot say I ever felt the laste taste of a temptation in life for that same. Do ye think I'd be afther making a brute baste of myself?"

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

"And would n't it be mighty *quare* if I did, your honor?"

*Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.*

"By the Powers, did ye never know that my father and



mother are not yet born? and how thin would I *dishonor* them?"

*Thou shalt not steal.*

"And is it stealing you'd be afther keeping me from? How can I steal what is my own entirely?" (N. B. Adam could *not* say this, when the "command" about the "tree," ("arbitrary," as you call it,) was given him; so that, you see, he is condemned for "eating," even by the Decalogue. But to go on with his catechism.)

*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

"Sure it would be sthrange if I committed adultery with my own wife; for sorra another woman do I see here; and she's enough, any way." (N. B. Too much, in one sense, Adam soon found her.)

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods——.*

"Covet? and hav'n't I told you it 's all my own,—from a peach to a porcupine?"

*Thou shalt do no murder.*

"Murder? and who is there to murder except the mistress? And what for should you think I should murder her? Is it just for a thrifle of pace and quietness? and is it she, the sweet crathur, that's part of myself? And faix, would n't that be flat suicide? Throth, your honor, I wonder what the angels,—no offince in life,—can be made of; for niver a commandment of the tin has anything to do with Paradise!"

I really think this Irish Adam is worth your attention. The command, however, about stealing, you see, is easily evaded on the supposition that your "arbitrary command" is *not* given: if it be, arbitrary though you are pleased to deem it, an article of the Decalogue comes in, and Adam is required to make a distinction between "*Meum*" and "*Tuum*."

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XLIX.

TO THE SAME.

ARRAN, Sept., 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The other instance of the presumed “legendary” style you gave, as a specimen of the narratives you feel disposed to reject, is the history of Balaam. I put out of view, as in the previous instance, the *miraculous* in the affair, inasmuch as I have dealt with that on general grounds; and because, in the abstract, you acknowledge you have no objection to miracle. All your difficulty seems to be about the *degree* and *kind* of the miraculous you deem worthy of reception.

Now whether it be more *probable* that an ass should speak than fire cease to burn, (as in the case of the Three Children,) or hungry lions practise fasting, (as in the case of Daniel,) — both which last you admit to be historic, — is really a question I cannot enter into; the reception of the fact as miraculous must, as in other cases, be determined by this: — Is the external evidence for this miraculous narrative as unexceptionable as for other *similar* events which we scruple not to admit? In the present case you must reason in the same way.

As for the *matter* of what Balaam’s ass says, I am sure you will concede *that* to have been most excellent sense, and very superior to the talk of Balaam himself; — *so* superior, indeed, that it is hard to say, on this occasion, which *was* the ass, — the ass or the ass’s master; or rather it *is* easy, — for it is very certain that Balaam was far the greater ass of the two.

And, indeed, this is one of your *a priori* grounds for believing this history of Balaam to be no history all. You

cannot, you say, imagine a man so illuminated — so preternaturally privileged with spiritual knowledge — acting so like a dolt.

Pardon me, my dear friend; but this is the weakest reasoning of all. Depend on it, the pictures of human nature in the Old Testament — even the most Rembrandt-like — are all true to the life, — exact types of what is every day quite as unaccountable in human character and conduct. Nay, if you will but go with sufficient metaphysical depth into the phenomena of a depraved will acting against the clear light of reason and conscience, you will find *every act* of deliberate sin equally — that is, *perfectly* — inexplicable! That man — that *any* man — should, with his eyes perfectly open, do what he knows, what he feels, reason and conscience both condemn, and of which he himself will often even tell you he will bitterly repent, is an intractable paradox; and every man who so acts — and who has not so acted? — only repeats the “mad prophet’s” story.

Do we not see, every day, instances enough in which the largest, clearest knowledge of duty, the divinest endowments of genius, the highest intellectual illumination, are not at all inconsistent with the commission of the coolest, the most enormous wickedness? Is not history, is not common life, full of illustrations of this mournful truth? Do we not see men, whose prevailing and habitual propensities carry the day against convictions which no revelation could make clearer? — against experience which no miracles could make more conclusive?

But as to this question, — whether Balaam’s character and conduct be *psychologically possible or probable*, — read Butler’s wonderful sermon upon it. I think you will doubt no more that the portrait is true to human nature and human nature’s power of juggling with itself; and that *your* philosophy, not that of the Bible, is superficial. Neither

knowledge nor endowments of any kind or degree are any absolute security against any amount of moral absurdity or obliquity. "But miracles!" you say,—"immediate consciousness of preternatural communications!"—No, nor even these. The question of "natural" or "preternatural" has nothing to do with the matter. The thing that constitutes the mystery is the breach of a law which, at the very moment we break it, we confess to be absolutely authoritative; and whether *that* conviction comes to us "naturally or "preternaturally" makes no difference. Now of this practical paradox all men, as well as Balaam, show themselves capable enough in every act of deliberate violation of conscience! As to miracles, I will show you in a moment, that belief in them as little involves any incredibility in Balaam's conduct.

You will acknowledge, I suppose, that it is the *belief* that miracles are really wrought,—whether really wrought or not,—that can alone be supposed to have any moral bearing, or give the conception of them any moral force. Well, among the ancient Jews,—among the ancient heathens,—through the middle ages, was not that belief universal and sincere? *Did* that belief that "miracles" were often wrought,—that direct communications were still maintained between the natural and supernatural,—that the door of the unseen world was, as it were, left *ajar*,—act in any appreciable degree as a deterrent from crime on man? Was there any lack of crimes in consequence? Were there not as deliberate and flagrant sins committed then as in our more sceptical age? Were they not wrought in spite of man's being haunted by this very conviction that he lived amidst "miracles," which might at any moment disclose or avenge his guilt, and though he was often miserable in proportion to that belief? Miracles no doubt have an important function; a valid intellectual

bearing; they are of use, as evidence in given cases, to confirm the message of God to man; but the most sincere — the most vivid belief in them has, of itself, no power to operate a moral change on man's depraved will. And it were strange if it could, when he is so often seen acting against a knowledge of duty clear as the sun at mid-day, — clear as the clearest convictions which any evidence from earth, heaven, or hell, can produce upon him. So profoundly true is that saying of Christ, — "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead."

Ponder these things a little, and remember the moral phenomena which the history of man in every age presents; and I fancy you will be slow to pronounce any of the moral portraits of the Bible incredible, however great the moral paradox they may involve.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER L.

TO ———

SUTTON, Friday Jan. 12, 1849.

MY DEAR YOUTH,

I have heard, — need I say with dismay? — from your relative, and my dear friend, Mr. W——, that you have become such a "philosopher" as to have discovered the inutility of all "prayer," and that you have resolved to give it up!

Pardon me for saying, that it would have been better if you had given up your "philosophy" — *such* philosophy, I mean; for it is a "philosophy falsely so

called." True philosophy demands no such sacrifice; and I hope, from the regard you have for me, you will at least read with patient attention what I have to say to you.

Philosophy! why, my dear youth, one *fact*, which, I am told, you acknowledge to be still a *puzzle* to you, is enough to show that a genuine philosophy, — the philosophy of Bacon, — the philosophy you profess so revere so much, — distinctly condemns your conclusion as utterly *unphilosophical*. You confess, it seems, that seeing the clear inutility of prayer, from the impossibility of supposing God to contravene the "order of antecedents and consequents," or to infringe His own laws, (of all which babble by and bye,) it is to you a great "puzzle" that the overwhelming majority of the race in all ages, — of philosophers and peasants, — of geniuses and blockheads, — of the refined and the vulgar, — the bulk even of those who plead for the doctrine of "moral necessity" itself, — have contended for the propriety, the efficacy, the necessity of prayer! that man, in trouble, seems naturally to resort to it! that, for the most part, it is only in prosperity that those who deny its value can afford to do so; that when they come to a scene of distress, or a deathbed, even they, in the greater number of cases, break out, — if they believe, as you do, in a presiding deity at all, — into cries for help, and supplications for mercy; just as naturally as they weep when sorrowful, or rejoice when happy!

You call these facts a *puzzle*; they seem a curious example of human "inconsistency," — of the tardiness of man to embrace a genuine philosophy! Ha! ha! ha!

I fancy there is another explanation that smacks a little more of a *genuine* philosophy. Surely, if the great bulk of mankind, all their lives long, whimsically admit in theory the propriety and efficacy of prayer, even while they daily neglect it in practice, — if multitudes, who would *like* very

well to have a burdensome and unwelcome duty which they neglect, proved to be no duty at all, are still invincibly convinced that it is such, — must not a genuine inductive philosophy confess that such a concurrence of wise and vulgar, of philosophy and instinct, and all too against seeming interest and strong passions, — is an indication that the *constitution of human nature itself* favors the hypothesis of the efficacy and propriety of prayer? — and, if so, ought not that to be taken into account in your philosophy? *I* contend that it is decisive of the controversy, if you are really to philosophize on the matter at all. Meantime it seems, you account it merely a great *puzzle*, amidst that *clear demonstration* you have, of the inutility and absurdity of prayer!

If you say, “I have confessed it is a puzzle; what does it prove?” — I answer, “Prove? my fine fellow; why it proves *this*, — that *the* fact which ought to determine your philosophy on this question is against you. Yes; — *the* fact which a Bacon would take principally into account, utterly refutes you. Stick fairly to your *induction*, and I will give you leave to infer as long as you will. The facts you call a “puzzle” prove that the normal constitution of human nature pleads, distinctly, both for the propriety and efficacy of prayer. Such facts say as plainly of man, he was made to do this or that, — it is his *nature* to do this or that, — as the fire to burn or the sun to shine.

If you say, as you *do* say, “But I cannot *account* for the efficacy of prayer with my belief of ‘unvarying laws,’ or reconcile the practice with my *philosophy*,” the true Baconian answers, “And who asks you to reconcile, in all cases, observed facts with other observed facts, or with supposed consequences from them? The question with *me* is as to the *facts*, and not as to their reconciliation with other facts which I may or may not be able to effect. There are many observed facts in *all* departments of science which I

know not how to reconcile with others: but I have nothing to do with that; I have to do with the facts, and a just induction from them." So far from your objection being reasonable, one of the plagues of philosophy is, that men, while they profess reverence for Bacon, will thus perpetually forget his maxims; and, when they do so, never fail to poison science by making their reception of facts depend on their hypotheses for reconciling them!

Do you not see, then, that if the facts of the case be, what I contend and you concede them to be, you in ignoring them and calling them a "puzzle," so far from being the Baconian you boast, are rather imitating the "schoolmen" whom he derides, — pooh poohing and passing by *facts* because you deem them irreconcilable with other facts or presumed facts? If *facts*, your duty, as a Baconian, is to receive them into your philosophy, even though they be by you utterly irreconcilable.

And do you not also see that your difficulty may be *retorted on you*? Ought you not to confess to two "puzzles" instead of one? Is it not irreconcilable with *your* theory, as a Theist, that an infinitely wise Being should have so constituted human nature that man is prompted to the exercise of prayer, and usually acknowledges its duty and propriety even while he neglects it, while yet prayer has no significance in the world, and is a senseless mockery of the Deity, who nevertheless, it seems has necessitated it? If you will not have any philosophy of *facts* (which is Bacon's philosophy) till you can reconcile them, be pleased to reconcile this caprice of God in the constitution of human nature with your "unvarying laws," which tell you that prayer is mockery and folly.

Will it not sound odd to say that God has instituted "unvarying laws," which render all prayer to Him absurd and inefficacious, and yet has bestowed upon man such a



nature that he is normally impelled to offer prayer, and even when he does *not*, to acknowledge its propriety and efficacy, while yet it is an essential absurdity? I beseech you to apply your philosophy of induction impartially.

If you would but reason in the present case as you would with the Atheist on the question of Theism, you would see how illogical was your conclusion. Against *him*, I know you would argue that the normal tendency of man to admit a Deity of some kind,—and to manufacture a thousand rather than be without one,—is, in your estimation, a strong indication of there *being* a Deity, and of this religious tendency in our nature being bestowed by Him; but whether originating with Chance or God, you would reasonably argue that it is a proof of the *religious nature of man*, and that, as all your philosophy must be founded on that nature such as it is, and not as it is *not*, we must acquiesce in the conclusion that there is a Deity, though there be none. You would also, perhaps, say that, for that very reason, the enterprise of Atheism to eradicate this notion from men's minds must be utterly futile; and if asked why, you would say that, whether there be a God or not, *fact* shows that it is the constitution of human nature to believe in one, even though there be none. Apply a similar argument to this subject of prayer, and I fancy you will find it tolerably parallel. But you are still more unreasonable in your position than the Atheist in his. The Atheist in the parallel case might still have to utter a little apologetic nonsense, from which you would be debarred. He might say, "Well, admitting it to be a principle of our nature that men *will* believe in a God, and that therefore I shan't be able to eradicate it, it may have been implanted by that Chance which has already done so many other wonderful things!" But as to you,—no such doughty *machina* as chance is at your

beck; if you *admit* that the impulse to "prayer," and belief in its propriety and necessity, is a normal fact in the constitution of humanity,—that it is the spontaneous conclusion of unsophisticated reason and feeling,—you, with *your* views of an Allwise Fabricator of man's nature, cannot resort to any similar hypothesis. All this I have said, because you admit the *fact* adverted to; and I say that instead of calling it a "puzzle," and sitting down content with that, you are bound to take it into your philosophy. Now if you do so, I think you will have as insoluble a problem as that supposed "incompatibility of prayer with general laws," which induces you to reject all prayer;—namely, an "unvarying law" *within* man which prompts him to pray, and "unvarying laws" *without*, which inform him, it appears, that he will always pray to to no purpose!

But this letter has grown to a greater length than I intended; if I conclude it here, do not suppose that I am going to leave your *soi-disant* "philosophy" unassailed. I say, indeed, that the general facts I have insisted on, established by induction, ought to induce you to recant your opinion; but, quite apart from that, I deem it shallow, and, in another letter, will endeavor to prove it so.

Your sincere friend,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LI.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 15, 1849.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I write without waiting for any reply to my last; because, of the two, I would prefer letting you have my views in full without any answer from you whatever.

Supposing that *fact* true on which I have so much insisted in my last letter, then, even if I were to admit all that your philosophy claims, what would follow? Why, that you could not, as you say, *reconcile* the “efficacy of prayer” with the “unvarying laws of nature.” Now, as I contend that there are many *other* things in the coexistence of which you believe, though you cannot reconcile them, — as, for example, in the absolute prescience of God, and the responsibility of man — His infinite goodness, in spite of the permission of evil — and the connection of body and mind, though there seems to be utter dissimilarity of substance — (not to mention a hundred more,) — I presume I grant you very little, if I concede in the present case your impotence to reconcile paradoxical truths; and that you take a great deal more than either I or any one else will give you, when you assume that because you cannot *reconcile* “prayer” with the “immutability” of God, and the unvarying operation of His laws, *therefore* the efficacy of prayer is an illusion.

But now let me examine your philosophy itself, and see what it is worth. You say, first, that as “general laws” of unvarying uniformity have been enacted by divine wisdom, and the Deity is immutable, prayer can have no efficacy; it cannot avert the evil nor propitiate the good, which, in either case, *will* and must befall us, whether we pray or not; so that to “pray is to play the fool.”

I wish, when you talk of “general laws,” you would not forget that they are perpetually modified and traversed by laws which have to *us*, all the effect of *special* laws; which produce events to *us* contingent and fortuitous, and which may be, for aught you can *prove*, infinitely varied in operation, relatively to a number of conditions of which “prayer” may be *one*. A house is burned down: you say it is the law of fire to burn; very true —

but when, of five men in it, one escapes and four perish, what is the *general* law which produces these opposite results? A vessel is wrecked, and goes down; but why seven are saved and twenty-seven drowned, it might, in like manner, be difficult to show by any general law. The results to us are so fortuitous, and so little under the dominion of known *law*, that we never dare to speculate on them; and, by the minutest difference in the arrangement of the most trivial circumstances, these results may be endlessly modified. Now it is out of these, to us, "fortuities," in which, as seen by an infinite intellect, there is "law," as everywhere else, though *we* can trace none, that God selects the instruments of that discipline which He exercises over each one of us, and which, for aught we can *demonstrate*, He may *actually* vary and modify, but, at all events, may have determined beforehand *shall* be "varied and modified," with reference to Prayer. Even if one were to suppose the results modified quite *pro re natâ*, in reference to the ever-shifting conditions of the individual mind, it would be impossible for you to disprove it, though I deem the notion unphilosophical; there would be no impossibility in it. The Infinite Wisdom that weaves "the whole web of our life" can, if He pleases, insert a thread or draw out a broken one; and yet the entire plan, except at the point of such "callida junctura," may remain as it was, and the general result be reached by a slightly varied road. All this would, if He pleased, be as easy to Him as for an old woman to mend a cabbage-net. But not to insist on this. However foreseen and provided for, it is by the aforesaid endless intricacies in the operation of "general laws," — intricacies which we can never reduce to calculation, because they are the result of the intervention of a thousand secondary laws, more or less general, and of which

the condition of "prayer" may be one,—that God secures our absolute dependence on *Him*,—renders that "Prevision" on which proud science is so fond of counting as its ultimate triumph, an impossible vanity,—and effectually prevents us, and will ever prevent us, with all our wisdom, from knowing "what a day or an hour shall bring forth." And as by these contingent events—I mean contingent to us—He secures our perpetual dependence,—so within these limits man instinctively feels is the sphere of prayer. When we have once ascertained a "general law," we never pray that *that* may cease to act: no sane man prays that gravitation may be suspended; that he may never die; that if his house catch fire, fire may not burn it; but only that things may be granted or averted, which, in millions of ways, he sees, by *experience*, admit of either alternative.

I see your objection here; but, pardon me, I have already anticipated both it and the answer to it. You will *object*, of course, that though the events to which I have referred are "fortuities" to *us*, they are not so to an infinite intellect (which not only I grant, but contend for); that they have been "pre-arranged," and will take effect, in due time and order, in the rigid concatenation of "antecedents and consequents." Very well; but not to content myself with what I have already said, I answer thus:—*Must* you not grant that the phenomena of men's Minds, as well as all outward events, are among the things which enter into this concatenation of pre-arrangements? *Must* you not grant that they are among the most important "antecedents" of almost all human events? Now, can you show that "Prayer" is not one of these mental "conditions" and "antecedents" of certain effects?

Let us suppose, and I am confident I may defy you to disprove it, (I indeed believe it is the absolute truth,) that

amongst other "pre-arrangements" of Divine Wisdom, — and to the maintenance of which, therefore, all that "immutability," on which you found so much, is pledged. — it has been decreed that "Prayer" shall be one of the indispensable conditions of the stable enjoyment of God's favor. Let us suppose He has decreed, that, since it is fit and right, in itself, that the creatures of His power, the subjects of His law, the objects of His bounty, should express their homage; — that since they can be fully happy (as He wills they should be) only in the continual recognition of their dependence on Him; — that since, whatever inferior good He may bestow upon them, they cannot (such is their nature) know what permanent and unalloyed felicity is, but in His "favor which is life, and His loving kindness which is better than life," — let us suppose, I say, for these reasons, He has decreed that, as an act of fealty, as an expression of gratitude, as a symbol of dependence, as an utterance of want, prayer shall be an unvarying pre-requisite of all real permanent good; — that though He may often refuse a petition for *seeming* temporal good, because it is *but seeming*, or refuse it because He intends yet greater good by denying, — He has decreed, and for ever, that in the end only *he* shall be truly happy, get what he hopes, and receive what he needs, who "seeks His face," — let us suppose. I say, all this, (and I am very certain you cannot show its improbability or absurdity.) what then? Why just this, — that if this *be* a condition of the Divine conduct towards us, if it be one of the "wise pre-arrangements" — *one* of the "unvarying laws," — your "philosophy," my young friend, is still very true, but unluckily confutes your "conclusion!" I have introduced, you see, but another of your pleasant "antecedents," and your little syllogism holds no longer.

If you say you cannot see the *reasonableness* of the *con-*

dition itself, as you can of industry being a condition of success in life, or uprightness a condition of possessing the esteem of others, — I answer, that *I* neither know nor can conceive of any condition more reasonable than that a creature should express his dependence, a beggar appeal to a benefactor; nor anything more reasonable than that the Sovereign Beneficence should shed *no* bounties on those who, though in abject poverty, are too proud or too presumptuous to seek aid of Infinite Affluence!

If you say that you see not how prayer should change the purpose of an Immutable Deity, I have replied, on the very scheme of your own philosophy, that prayer may be one of the antecedents fixed by that very Immutability; and if so, your argument is retorted with interest; — for then *not* to pray is to expect that He will change His “immutable” purpose, and nullify His own conditions of our success!

If you say, you cannot see a *casual* connection between prayer and its fulfilment, I reply, that you know it is the boast of modern philosophy to have discovered that we know not the real *casual* connection between *any* antecedent and its consequent. I am sure, as I have above said, that *this* “antecedent and consequent” may be seen to be as reasonable as any in the world.

Finally — I would ask you, why you ever address a prayer for aid to your fellow man? If you say, as doubtless you will, “Oh, but he is capable of being moved, — of having his will changed,” — I answer, very true; but go one step further back, and see whether you are not in the same dilemma as before: for these determinations of your neighbor’s mind are among the “pre-arrangements,” elements in the huge complications of “general laws,” on which you lay so much stress! They are “pre-arranged” before you utter a syllable; and though whether they shall be in your

favor or not, is unknown to you, it is all known by the Infinite Intellect, and the result has entered into His "pre-arrangements." If you say, as it is certain you will say, — "But my appeal may be among the *pre-arranged* methods of operating that result, I answer — "Exactly so. Stick to that argument; only remember that it may equally hold for the necessity and duty of prayer."

In short, the mere concatenation of antecedents and consequents, — even to the admission of the most rigid doctrine of "moral necessity," — will not avail to prove the "inefficacy of prayer;" as, indeed, the immense majority of those who have advocated that doctrine have never pretended anything of the kind. You can only render your argument conclusive by turning your "general laws" into the Mahometan's "fate;" and then you may dispense, with equal reason, with *all* conditions of "predestined" events. "What is to be is to be;" that will settle everything for you. You may, for that reason, dispense with industry as a condition of success in your profession, with prudence in the choice of a house or a wife, just as with "prayer" as a condition of God's blessing.

If you choose to go thus far, I think you will be consistent, — but you will certainly be undone. You may say, if you please (as, I dare say, a metaphysical *scapist* would, though I hope you would not.) — "Well, my philosophy still holds true; — for it seems the 'laws' are unvarying, and you have but introduced another; and as all the phenomena are concatenated, if I *am* to pray as an indispensable condition, it is already decreed that I shall; and if not, I am exempted from further troubling myself about the matter." In that case I shall not think it worth while any longer to argue with you; only remember that if prayer be an indispensable pre-condition of God's favor, then if you do not pray, you "lose the blessing." If you act on



such a theory, you may triumph in your *soi-disant* philosophy; but *such* a victory, my young Pyrrhus, without waiting for another, will ruin you.

I have not thought it of moment to reply to the logical refinement sometimes urged — that even if it be granted that prayer is an indispensable *pre-condition* of the divine favor its inefficacy as a *proper* cause may still be maintained; — for I am convinced that you would not urge it seriously. As to the *event*, it is all one, and I do not think it worth while to discuss such subtleties.

If a man were to offer you an estate on the payment of a peppercorn rent (and our “prayers” are worth not so much to the Deity), it is certain that the man’s bounty, and not the peppercorn, would be the *cause* of your good fortune; but as without the peppercorn you would be without the estate, I imagine you would have little inclination to chop logic with him about its being “casual” or otherwise.

It is my unfeigned “prayer,” my young friend, that you may speedily revise your opinion, and not be “spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit,” which by the way, in the present case, are but different terms for the same thing.

Ever yours faithfully and affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LII.

TO ———.

August, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

So you have really the effrontery to suppose that I shall admit your caricature of the doctrine of the Atonement to be a true picture! I am resolved to be plain with you on this subject, and to tell you, once for all, my mind. I shall first vindicate my own views; but do not imagine I

shall stop there; gird your sword-belt tight, for, be assured, you shall be put on the defensive before I have done with you. But I cannot write to-day. In a day or two expect to hear from me. I could not delay, however, sending this brief protest against your most odious and unjust caricature.

In spite of all,

Your affectionate friend,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LIII.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have discovered, it seems, that you cannot believe the "mysterious doctrine of the Atonement." I am sure you cannot, neither can I, if the doctrine of the Atonement be what you represent it. You will say, perhaps, that it is the doctrine of the majority of Christians. I am certain it is *not*; but if it were, it is not *mine*; and it is mine that I am bound to expound, and you to confute.

I will talk to you in freedom, as we used to do when we lived nearer; with love, as our long friendship demands, and with honesty no less claimed by truth. And my dear friend, bear with me, if, here and there, affection seems urgent; for I do, in very truth, believe that the ~~essence~~ of the Gospel consists eminently in this ~~one~~ article. And we have thought far greater and better men than I pretend to be — and (which is significant) have thought so more strongly as they grew older, and felt increasingly, by personal experience, the value of what they held so dear. In this eminently was their HOPE. Thus it was with E. Hall, Foster, Chalmers, Dr. Johnson.

And now for your fancy sketch. You say, that according to the "current" notions of Christians, "God is represented, in moody inexorable wrath, as *averse* to save man till, Moloch-like, He was unjustly propitiated by innocent blood; till Christ's sufferings wrung from Him a sullen and ungracious pardon." Who can believe this, you ask? Who, indeed? *I* cannot, for one; but then I know of no one else who does.

I grant that in some bygone ages, and even now, among some uneducated folks, that know not how to think clearly or to speak justly, — perhaps also in some fanatical or injudicious hymns, of whose authors the same may be said, and, of course, in the select but very limited circle of anti-nomianism, — you may meet with extravagances of statement which, more or less, justify your *caricature*; but it is certain, nevertheless, that it is a caricature, even of the most injudicious representations; and the immense majority of Christians would, I am perfectly confident, refuse to accept it as *their* doctrine of the Atonement just as much as I do.

At all events, if it is with *me* you think you are in controversy, you are quite mistaken. I reject and abhor your description of the doctrine as much as you can do, and you must therefore give a very different reply to *my* arguments; and when I say my arguments, I know I also speak the sentiments of the vast majority of Christians. But at all events, be pleased to argue with *me*.

In the first place, then, so far from believing God *averse* to save man, I believe that it was the very intensity of His desire to do so, (as the New Testament plainly teaches,) which prompted Him to interpose in our behalf: "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten son;" and as to what you say of "*injustice*," I believe that whatever was done, was done with Christ's own perfectly voluntary con-

currence, as the same book teaches: "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself." Now, if this were done by Christ's voluntary act, where is the injustice? How, indeed, was it more unjust for God to allow Christ thus to lay down His life, *of His own free-will*, on my theory than on yours? I shall presently show that it is at least more incomprehensible on yours. For since you admit that Christ did not die for any fault of His own, and contend that He did not die for any fault of ours, for what *did* He die, and for what reason did God *let* Him? On *your* theory, all this not a little perplexes me. But I shall come to that presently. Depend on it, I shall not fail to ask you for a theory of the rationale of Christ's death.

Well, then, we believe that it was God's intense love for man which led Him to adopt so stupendous a method of evincing it, and that He justly could do so, because Christ was as willing to be "given" for man as God to "give" Him. But you say:—"Why could not God forgive the sin of man without any such intervention? Could He not forgive just as a father can—absolutely and without any compensation to law? Who can believe the contrary?"

I can, for one. I do not mean to say that I should be justified,—apart from what I deem the revealed fact, that Atonement *has* been provided, apart from the evidence of Scripture on the matter,—in affirming the contradictory of your proposition, or in pronouncing at all confidently either way. The subject is, in my judgment, "far too high for us" to be dealt with *à priori*. But in spite of the confidence with which this seemingly simple view of yours is often propounded, I *do* mean to contend that, even by the light of nature, (if we enter into the subject at all profoundly,) there is quite as much reason to doubt your theory as to affirm it. And the more the subject is investigated, the

less reason I apprehend will there appear for a summary *à priori* determination of it.

Nor do I fear lest one of your candor should indulge in the usual talk of "absurdity," "antiquated prejudices," and the like. I know that you will concede that I am as qualified by thought and reading to form an opinion as yourself; I know you will admit that many minds of the very first order have also arrived at the same conviction, namely, that there *may* have been, that there *may* be, a moral impossibility in the way of proclaiming a universal amnesty to a guilty world without some homage, like that of the Atonement, to the principle of LAW.

To your question, therefore, "Can we conceive that it is not always possible for a father to forgive, as a father, simply and absolutely? And cannot God do so too?" I reply, it does not follow that even *man* can forgive his own son, simply and absolutely, if he be a King as well as a Father: and, for a similar reason, it does not follow that God can. And it is precisely here, as I conjecture, that we should find, if we could comprehend the entire problem instead of a very small part of it, — if we knew the great "arcana" of the divine government in all its immensity, — if we knew all the relations of this world to other worlds, of our race to other races, and of the bearings of Time on Eternity, — the origin of the real difficulty in man's salvation, and the necessity for the Atonement. We can only reason a little way; but as far as we *can* reason, I do not flinch from saying that every *fact* we know is against the theory of your simple unconditional forgiveness.

We can but reason in reference to a subject so vast, and in all its bearings so infinitely transcendental to our comprehension, by *analogy*. Now it is certain, that in any moral government with which we are acquainted, or of

which we can form any conception, — in any government whose subjects are ruled by *motives* only, and where *will* is unconstrained, the principle of the prompt unconditional pardon of crime on profession of repentance, and purpose of amendment, would be most disastrous; — as we invariably see it is, in a family, in a school, in a political community. Now, have we any reason to believe that in a government most emphatically *moral*, — a government of which all the moral governments with which we are acquainted are but imperfect imitations, and which are, indeed, founded on a very partial application of the laws which a perfect moral government implies, similar easy good-natured lenity would be attended with less ruinous effects? If we have none, then, since we cannot think that God's government will or can *cease* to be moral; or that He ever will physically constrain His creatures to be happy or holy, — indeed the very notion involves a contradiction in terms, — would not the proposed course of universally pardoning guilt on profession of penitence prove, in all probability, most calamitous? Let us then suppose (no difficult thing) that God fore-saw this; — that such a procedure would be of pernicious consequences, not to this world only, but for aught we know, to many; that it would diminish His authority, relax the ties of allegiance, invite His subjects to revolt, make them think disloyalty a trivial matter? If so, — and I defy you to prove that it may not be so, — then would there not be benignity as well as justice, mercy as well as equity, in refusing the exercise of a weak compassion which would destroy more than it would save? Let us suppose further, that knowing all this, God knew also that His yearning compassion for lost and guilty man might be safely gratified by such an expedient as the Atonement; that so far from weakening the bonds of allegiance, such an acceptance of a voluntary propitiation would strengthen them; that it

would flash on all worlds an indelible conviction no less of His justice than of His mercy; — of His justice that He could not pardon without so tremendous a sacrifice, — of His mercy that He would not, to gratify it, refrain even from this; — that it would crush for ever that subtle sophism so naturally springing in the heart of man, and which gives to temptation its chief power — that God is too merciful to punish; I say, if all this be so, — and I fancy you will find it difficult to prove that it *may* not be so, — does not the Atonement assume a new aspect? Is it any longer chargeable with absurdity or caprice? May it not be justly pronounced a device worthy of divine wisdom and benignity? Is it not calculated to secure that which is its proposed end? — at once to make justice doubly venerable and mercy doubly dear? — justice more venerable that it could not be lightly assuaged; mercy more dear that it would be gratified, though at such a cost?

Thus (so far from your representation being just) *our* theory is, that God was intensely desirous, as well as Christ, of man's salvation; and that the *mode* of achieving it, though we cannot, *à priori*, speculate on it, was the result of a great moral necessity, which Love was resolved to confront since it could not evade it. And hence it is that so many millions, won and vanquished by this spectacle, have declared (and this is the only just influence of the doctrine) that it is the "Atonement" which has chiefly furnished them, as with hope and peace, so with the strongest motives to revere Justice, to obey Law, to "go and sin no more." If you say that the presumed moral necessity for some such method of salvation, — which should provide a safe amnesty for guilt by securing the law from dishonor, is a mere speculation, — I grant that, *apart from Scripture*, it is so; but I also contend that if we consider what a moral government is, and must ever involve, it is as *probable*, and

as truly *philosophical*, as the counter-speculation you would substitute for it.

And, after all, must not *you* too imagine some unknown, inscrutable, moral necessity for so astounding a fact as the death of Christ; for the most cruel and agonizing death of the only human being who, as *you* believe not less than I, was perfectly innocent, and deserved not to suffer at all? And here, having vindicated my view, as intrinsically not less probable and philosophical than your own, I proceed to show that it is abundantly more so, and to retort upon you, with interest, the charges of "caprice" and absurdity. We, at all events, assign an adequate cause of Christ's death; you assign none at all, or none that does not increase the difficulty. Yes, my friend, pardon me for saying it, but that very argument on which you lay so much stress, namely, that the Atonement is needless in itself, and presents a "savage" view of the government of God, may, as I conceive, be retorted, on *your* theory of the death of Christ, with tenfold cogency. But I must reserve the expression of my sentiments for another letter.

Yours sincerely,

B. E. H. G.

## LETTER LIV.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND, .

Yes, — I repeat, that on *your* theory the death of Christ is an utterly incomprehensible enigma; we cannot assign, we cannot imagine, any reason for a sacrifice at once so costly, yet so gratuitous. In Christ we have the only example (yourself being witness) of perfect and faultless innocence



which has ever been exhibited to the world, and we see Him, through life, involved in the deepest shades of sorrow, and subjected to a death of terrible and mysterious agonies! perfect holiness, perfect obedience to God, perfect love to man, requited with more scorn and oppressed with more suffering than even the foulest guilt in this world ever was subjected to! And all for — what? For nothing, absolutely nothing that is intelligible! You tell me that He suffered as an *EXAMPLE* to us. As an example? An example of what? Was it as an example of this — that the more men obey and love God, the darker may be the divine frown, and the greater *the liability* to suffer under the incomprehensible mysteries of the divine administration? So that if we were to become absolutely perfect as Christ was, that moment we might reach the climax of misery! That as He who was alone “without spot” was condemned to the worst doom, so, for aught we can infer from *such* an example, innocence and happiness may be in inverse proportion! If you say He suffered to show us with what sweetness and patience *we* ought to suffer, — you forget that not only would less than such bitterness as His teach that lesson, but that His suffering so much more than we do, with no guilt, His own or ours, to cause it, unteaches the lesson; it unhinges our trust in the divine equity altogether. You forget, it seems to me, that there is a *double* aspect of these sufferings. How do they affect our apprehensions of God? Can we reconcile it with that benignity and equity for which you are so jealous, to visit perfect innocence with more sorrow than guilt, merely to show the guilty how they ought to learn to bear a *just* punishment? I assure you that, on such a theory of the divine administration, the death of Christ is to me the darkest blot on the divine government, — the most melancholy and perplexing phenomenon of the

universe, — the most gratuitous *apparent* departure from rectitude and equity with which the spectacle of the divine conduct presents us !

And this I feel with double energy and intensity when I recall the agony of that prayer with which the Redeemer prayed that, "if it were possible," the final horrors might be spared Him — "the bitter cup pass away from Him."

And that this prayer did not refer to the transient cloud of Gethsemane, but to the prospective horrors of Calvary, is, I think, evident from the expressive figure used by our Lord at His apprehension, and which is recorded by the evangelist who does *not* record the prayer in Gethsemane. "The cup," says He, "which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it ?" — an expression, which is not only, as Paley says, an instance of undesigned harmony in the narratives of different evangelists, but, as I think, also shows, by the *character* of the metaphor, what was the meaning of the prayer in the garden.

Thrice, then, He offered that prayer; and thrice in vain. Yet, on *your* theory, where was the necessity? Why was it "impossible" that the cup should pass from Him? Impossible? Nothing would seem more easy; nay, nothing more impossible than that, having deserved no sorrow at all, His prayer should be uttered in vain? Is *this* the way in which you would give us a more attractive view than the doctrine of the Atonement affords, of the love of God? Is it by showing us the only being, in human form, who never deserved to feel His *justice*, striving in vain to propitiate His *mercy*?

We, at least, assign an adequate cause of all this mystery; we suppose that it was to rescue a lost world that God "willed" that "the cup should not pass from Him;" and that Christ, who thus prayed, also "willed" to drink it rather than decline it, at such a cost as the frustration of

His divine compassion and the surrender of a world to perdition. But you, what reason can *you* assign? Is it a more conciliating view of the divine justice and love that they thus afflicted innocence for nothing? or nothing that is intelligible? and in spite of its own heart-rending cries that if any other expedient remained within the reach of Omnipotence itself, Omnipotence taxed to the uttermost of its resources, that “cup might pass away?”

So deeply do I feel the dark shadow which this view throws over the divine administration, that even if the positive texts for the reality of the “Atonement” were less numerous and decisive than I conceive they are, this mysterious spectacle of Perfect Innocence treated by Divine Justice more severely than guilt, for no imaginable necessity, would go far to convince me of the truth of the doctrine; but when I further compare all the inferences from the transaction itself with the testimony of Scripture,—when I see how *naturally* the doctrine harmonizes with the entire strain of Revelation,—with ancient rite and sacrifice,—with dogmatic statement and casual allusion,—with imagery, type and symbol,—with direct assertion and oblique reference,—I am beyond all doubt that the doctrine of the Atonement is a genuine doctrine of Christianity.

Such, my friend, is *my* view of the Atonement; not less philosophical, I contend, even viewed, *à priori*, than any other which human reason can devise; more naturally sustained by the prevailing language of Scripture; and *necessary*, if we would not render the death of Christ (so far from being a relief) a terrible aggravation of all the difficulties of the divine administration,—an inscrutable mystery, far harder than the doctrine of the Atonement itself! Argue against this doctrine, if you like, and I will weigh with scrupulous conscientiousness every syllable on so vital

a theme; but your argument must not be against a phantom of your own creation, which I renounce as much as you; it must be founded on no supposition of the divine *reluctance* to save — for it was God's love which provided the sacrifice; nor on presumed *injustice* in the infliction — for Christ Himself approved it; nor on the fancy that we hold some base huckstering theory of precisely so many ounces of suffering for so many ounces — parsimoniously weighed out — of mercy! *This* is absurd *per se*, for how can transient suffering be exactly equal to pangs of eternal duration? — it is derogatory to the divine mercy, for if justice exact a precise *quid pro quo*, where is the scope for mercy at all? — and it is utterly unnecessary, for the homage to law consists in the principle of the Atonement, not in the amount of suffering.

You must avoid, therefore, all such abjured views, or you will not touch *me*; while your *own* theory must fairly answer those objections to the divine equity, goodness, and love, which, as I have endeavored to show, may be justly retorted on it. And remember that if you insist on the injustice of God's inflicting suffering on Christ for the sins of others, you cannot escape similar difficulty, and greater in degree, on your own system; for can it be less unjust to inflict such sufferings on Christ *for no sins at all*? If it be unjust to accept Him as a sacrifice for the guilty, how much *more* unjust must it be to insist on the sacrifice for nothing, and when the victim thrice implored in agony that, "if it were POSSIBLE," the "cup might pass from Him?"

You are bound to demonstrate the "impossibility." How you should do so on your hypothesis is to me utterly inconceivable; for you say that God can, with utmost ease, pardon guilt without any compensation to His justice; if so, where could be the difficulty of sparing innocence? — rather, how was it possible to do otherwise? Till you

answer these things fairly and fully, I shall continue to believe the doctrine of the Atonement not only more consonant to Scripture, but a more rational account of Christ's Death, than your own.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LV.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

FRIDAY, May 11, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If it be the climax of virtue to have practised it till duty is transformed into pleasure, — as I am inclined to believe it is, — I am far enough at present from having attained that point. On the contrary, I find — confess, now, that it is the same with you — that things pleasant enough in themselves, at least not painful, become, the moment they assume the shape of duties, irksome. They put on, as it were, a stiff, starched dress, and lose all their alluring, seductive looks.

I will give you a whimsical illustration of this. In my recent anonymous *brochure*, which met with more approbation from the public than perhaps it deserved, — certainly more than I expected, — I felt, with my accustomed fastidiousness, when it came out, that a thousand things might be altered for the better. As I impatiently glanced over it, I felt, mingled with mortification, a positive pleasure in mentally making improvements, — adding something here, expunging something there, — giving a phrase a new turn, — illustrating a bare thought by an image or metaphor. The task, thus voluntarily prosecuted, was a positive delight. When, a few days ago, it was intimated that a new edition was called for, and I was requested to furnish the printer

with any alterations I might be meditating by a fixed day, it is inexpressible with what reluctance I turned to the task; and the thought that it must be done by a certain time has turned a pleasant amusement into insupportable drudgery. But what perverseness! The task is the same: and why should the thought that it *ought* to be done make it less pleasant? I have therefore set to work with a *will*, and am reaping my reward by finding that the task is becoming less a task as I pursue it, though duty has unquestionably marred the pleasure.

In the same way I have often found that if it be *necessary* to read a given book on a given day, there is not a book, out of the five thousand I have around me, that I would not rather take up than *that*!

I have somewhere read — and so have you I doubt not — of a petty German despot who, having heard that an old woman of seventy had never been beyond the precincts of her native city, thought he should like to “have it to say” (what is too costly or cruel for a despot if he “would like to have something to say!”) that one who had lived to be a very old woman had never been beyond the limits of the city, and therefore decreed that she should never be permitted to do so. It is said that the poor old lady so laid to heart the loss of that liberty which she had voluntarily lived without, all her life, that she took to her bed, and died in a few days! Surely human nature is the very image of that old woman.

We might at least learn, one would think, to submit without grumbling to any necessity, which, so long as it was *no* necessity, was not only submitted to without complaint, but was embraced as a pleasure! It was a smart saying of Locke, “Let your will go whither necessity would drive, and you will always preserve your liberty.” Very true — very sagacious, but rather difficult to practise. Simi-

larly we may say, make *duty* your *pleasure*, and it will be just the same thing as pleasure; but, like the other, it is more easily said than done. The culmination of virtue—and no doubt, by “perseverance in well doing,” we may approximate to it, though in heaven alone we shall fully attain it—is to find pleasure in duty, as such; to find not only that duty does not—as in my absurd condition, so frankly confessed, it often does,—make pleasure itself irksome, but that, when not absolutely painful, (and in heaven I suppose there will be *no* painful duties,) it is in itself a distinct source of pleasure. I believe even now, and in our imperfect condition, that the *having done* our duty is a source of greater pleasure than anything else; but then it is the having done it, I fear. We enjoy it by a reflex act, and possibly often linger so long in complacent retrospect, that we forget the *next* duty in admiring ourselves! If we could but feel pleasure in duty while it was a-doing, how happy should we be, for we should then be happy all the day long! And it will be so if we persevere. “At first we cannot serve God,” says Jeremy Taylor, “but by doing violence to all our wilder inclinations. The *second* days of virtue are pleasant and easy in the midst of all the appendant labors. But when the Christian’s last pit is digged, when he is descended to his grave and hath finished his state of sorrows and suffering, then God opens the river of abundance,—the river of life and never ceasing felicities.” But so different from this is the condition of men in general, that I almost think one of the best ways of teaching some duties would be to enjoin the due and regular abstinence from them. Tell a lazy man that he is never to get out of bed till ten in the day, and, my life for it, he will fall in love with early rising. Tell an irreligious man that he shall never enter a church, and there you will straightway find him. Certainly, in the present amiable

condition of man, the very presence of a law is a great provocative to neglect or violate it—a fact to which the Apostle seems to allude in the seventh of Romans; a passage, by the way, which ought not to have caused all the pother it has among the commentators.

I was amused by your defending yourself against the charge of negligence in writing, before you were accused. I am sure I *said* nothing, and, what is more, meant nothing, by my silence. It is a self-betrayal second only to that of the good Athenian in Hierocles. He told his Spartan friend, who had commissioned him to purchase some books, that he had “never received the letter about the books.” “Let me tell you,” said a West Indian proprietor to his assembled slaves, after some theft of which he wished to detect the perpetrator, “Let me tell you that it is in vain for you to attempt concealment; for he who has committed the deed will find a tumor sprouting out of the tip of his nose, which will effectually betray him.” Up went the finger of the luckless criminal to see whether the threatened pimple was a-coming—and so he was detected. My remarks on negligent correspondents were quite general; but you have put your finger to your nose, and stand self-confessed.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LVI.

TO THE SAME.

ARRAN, Monday, July 23, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I casually met the day before yesterday, on board a Clyde steamer, with one of those rare youths at whom we have so often laughed, who have seduced themselves into the belief that they have obtained a profound knowledge



of philosophy, by muddling their brains with dark translations of German metaphysicians, and the writings of those geniuses for obscurity who have so successfully imitated them in this country. Certainly there are minds which, like certain surfaces, absorb all the colors of light, and reflect you back only an aspect of perfect blackness: and they deserve to be called the Hottentots of Philosophy. What share vanity may have in affecting to know what others cannot pretend to understand, I cannot say; but these folks will go on using phrases, and terms of art, of marvellous vagueness, and exchanging formulæ of prodigious generality, just as if they had a meaning. Yet let me tell you, from my recent experience, that you can get on with them remarkably well. "By stopping them," you will say, "and requesting a rigid definition of their dark terms of art." Why, in that case, you would not get on at all. Your philosopher would be arrested at once. "How, then?" you will say. If you have a pretty good memory and a little invention, nothing more easy; be as profound as himself; assent to what he says, though you do not understand, and reply to it with something which you understand as little, and which *he* will as little understand. Let it be what it will, however, if it be sufficiently dark, he will be afraid not to *appear* to understand. Go on boldly with the same imposing obscurities and *formulate* with the same tremendous sounding phrases, and rely on it, you are as safe as he is. It is a great advantage of this species of philosophy, that you may be profound in it without having passed your novitiate, and talk a deal of deep metaphysics without knowing it.

We began on Kant, and did not absolutely desert daylight as long as we kept by him; at least we were in twilight; for he had a meaning, and often a profound one, though expressed in the most uncouth style which Philo-

sophy—not in his case “musical as is Apollo’s lute”—ever mumbled in.

But we soon made a deep plunge into utter midnight, and my young friend and I both frantically laid hold of anything in the darkness,—terms and words, that is to say, without any definite meaning,—just to keep ourselves up. I am sure we both did admirably, if anybody could but have comprehended it.

He said that he did not see anything so very difficult in Hegel’s paradox,—which sciolists had made such a pother about,—that “nothing” is equal to “being,” and that if “being and nothing be conjoined, you have existence.” He asked me what I thought of it? I told him that nothing could in my apprehension be more profound; and that it became as lucid as profound, if we only remember Hegel’s theory of “the evolution of the concrete.” According to that theory (he must remember, I was sure,) “the concrete is the *idea*, which, as a unity, is variously determined,—having the principle of its activity in itself, while the origin of the activity, the act itself, and the result are one, and constitute the *concrete*.” “Precisely so,” said he; “the innate contradiction of the concrete is the basis of its development, and though differences arise, they at last vanish into unity. To use the words of Hegel, there is ‘both the movement and repose in the movement. The difference hardly appears before it disappears, whereupon there issues from it a full and concrete unity.’ ” I was glad to hear it.

Having thus discussed, though in a somewhat *abstract* form, the theory of the “concrete,” he proceeded to say that all this throws admirable light on the great philosopher’s statement that the *Idea*, concrete and self-developing, is an organical system,—a whole comprehending in itself indefinite treasures of degrees and *momenta*; while philosophy is nothing in the world but the knowledge of this

evolution, and, so far as it is systematic and self-conscious thought, it is the very evolution itself." To such elementary statement I could not but nod in acquiescence.

We then got on to the Hegelian "Absolute." "This," said he, "is nothing but a continual 'process of thinking,' *without beginning and without end*." About this last, too, I made no difficulty; on the contrary, I firmly believed it; so that we were still entirely unanimous. "Now," said he, "that the evolution of ideas in the human mind is the process of all existence — the essence of the Absolute — of a Deity, so that Deity is nothing more than the absolute ever striving to realize itself in human consciousness," — (very imperfectly as yet, thought I, if Hegelian consciousness be the criterion), — "who can doubt?" Without venturing to contest so plain a doctrine, I asked him whether, nevertheless, there was not a little to be said for Schelling's notion that the rythmical law of all existence is cognizable at the same time by the internal consciousness of the subjective self, in the objective operation of Nature? He said he saw clearly enough its great ingenuity, — which was more than I could, — but thought his "three movements or potencies, — that of 'Reflexion,' whereby the Infinite strives to realize itself in the Finite, — that of 'Subsumption,' which is the striving of the Absolute to return from the Finite to the Infinite, — and that of the 'Indifference-point,' or point of junction of the two first, — were not to be admitted; for," said he, "is it not clear as the day that the poles ever persist in remaining apart — the *indifference-point* having never been fixed by Schelling." I could not help thinking it would be by his readers; however, I gravely told him I thought it was a very serious objection, and I should duly consider it.

I said I could not wonder that many, who had not *our* light, should refuse to allow, with Fichte, that "the *me* was

the absolute generating principle of all things," or the great Hegel's theory of the identity of object and subject. To this he shrugged his shoulders;—as much as to say, the evolution of the process of "eternal thinking," which constitutes God and all philosophy, is uncommonly slow in mankind—that's a fact. But he added that there could "not be the shadow of a doubt that the 'subjective' and 'objective' were really one, and that by their junction is constituted the only reality, which, whether we call it the subject-object or object-subject, is of not the slightest consequence in the world." I acquiesced entirely in that last observation; yet I could not but feel, I told him, that the "poles of all existence, though the indifference-point was thus found, seemed, after all, to be annihilated by coalescing;" and that I still found some little difficulty about the "process of thought assuming the objective form it does *in nature*;" and asked him whether he coincided in Hegel's solution of this difficulty—namely, that there is a "descent of the absolute idea from subject-object into a state of separation?" He condescended to acknowledge that it was one of the great difficulties of Hegel's system. I asked, whether, in the supposed case, the *relation*, which was the sole reality, between the subjective and objective would not be altered? He was pleased to say that that question touched the very quintessence of the whole system, and that it was a good deal to the purpose. Perhaps it was; and, at any rate, I was very glad to hear that I had spoken so much to the purpose without knowing it. I rather think it staggered him, as I am sure it did me, for I know no more than the dead what was the meaning of it.

"Again," said I, as if it had something to do with the subject, or at least the subject-object,—and perhaps it had, for I do not clearly see what was *the* subject, or *our* object—"since Hegel begins with zero, and evolves the

universe by a logical process of thought without any realistic stand-point, is there not some difficulty in conceiving how 'the process of thought' (to use his words) can ever *externalize* itself into the region of nature?" "Phenomenally," said he, "it may." "Phenomenally," said I, "no doubt it may; and so perhaps the subjectivity of the mind, subjectifying the objective in nature, leaves the subject-object still one."

In spite of all difficulties of this trivial kind, he expressed himself delighted with the Hegelian philosophy, and especially its *simplicity* of conception; it began, he said, avowedly on the principle that in the analysis of thought, as "identical with existence, we must take the very emptiest, most meaningless, and abstract notions we can find." I admitted that Hegel had in that succeeded admirably.

We then had some equally interesting conversation on Fichte's system; but we both thought that it was impossible to acquiesce in his notion — that the *me* gave its entire reality to the *not-me*, — especially as the reality which the *me*, in that case, transfers to the *not-me*, it must get, after all, from the *me*; so that the *me* constructs the *not-me*. Yet every fool imagines the *not-me* different from the *me*. On the other hand, according to this theory, the *not-me* most evidently limits the *me* — though itself non-existent except as a limitation of *me*! Who could admit this? — The plausibility of Fichte's theory, however, he conceded, and the clearness with which it was expressed, to which I, of course, cheerfully assented.

We now happily drew near Dunoon, where he said he was about to stop. I begged to know what book he had in his hand? He said it was the "Physio-Philosophy" of Oken, and asked me if I had ever read it? — as if I could be ignorant of so profound a philosopher! He remarked that it was one of the greatest contributions to science in

our time, and wondered that shallow folks should have complained of its being inserted in the publications of the "Ray Society." I frankly acknowledged there were some few things in it I could not satisfactorily comprehend, on which I thought he looked a little pleased at his own superiority. "For example," said I, opening the book at random, "I should be obliged if you would explain what is meant by this passage?" — I had no difficulty in pitching on one as dark as Tartarus.

To any one else, I dare say, it would have been a poser; but, from what I saw of my young friend's profundity, I have no doubt he would have made it all as clear as he had done the philosophy of Hegel. He reluctantly excused himself, as the boat was just about to stop.

He took leave of me with the most flattering expressions of pleasure at having fallen in with one who took a kindred interest in his favorite studies, and hoped we should shortly meet again; — a hope which *I* devoutly hope may be disappointed.

I felt exceedingly elated, however, at having been able so creditably to take my place with a deep philosopher, without my knowing or his knowing a syllable that we had been talking about. And I suspect he parted from me still better pleased. Milton records with innocent vanity, that he reflected with satisfaction that he had not unworthily supported his part in a Latin conversation with some foreign ambassadors, when they did him the honor of dining with him, or, as we should now say, when he did them the honour of entertaining them; for thus does the "whirligig of time bring about the revenges" of genius, and the poet takes precedence of all ambassadors. You remember what is told of Leibnitz, that being anxious to gain admission to the society of some alchemical adepts, he took sundry books of their delusive art, and stringing together at random all

the very hardest terms he could find, sent his lucubration to them as a card of introduction. They were astounded at one who could write so profoundly on their favorite science, and admitted him at once.

You think, perhaps, that it would require a good memory to recall some of the terms and phrases with which my "profundissimus" and I pelted one another. That is perhaps true; but you need not always stop for that; combine the hardest and most general terms, — the more incomprehensible the better, — and, bandied to and fro, they will seem alive with a vague meaning, like an old scarecrow fluttering in the wind. That is sufficient. And to convince you, I may tell you that some of the things I said were combinations *à la mode Leibnitz*; and yet I fancy I may defy you, or even your ingenious friend T—— M——, to say *which* is *which*. If you try, take heed; for perhaps you will find I can *trap* you by citing chapter and verse, where you think I have been extemporizing!

Campbell says, and says truly, that we are not to suppose that everything which is unintelligible is absurd, since we cannot pronounce on its truth or falsity; — therefore be pleased to regard the utterances above with mysterious reverence. "When the Teutonic theosopher," says the acute critic, "enounces that 'all the voices of the celestial joyfulness qualify, commix, and harmonize in the fire which was from eternity in the good quality,' I should think it equally impertinent to aver the falsity as the truth of this enunciation."

Believe me,

Yours ever truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LVII.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

ARRAN, July 30, 1849

MY DEAR MASON,

And so you are really surprised at the inconsistency of your patient's sending for you, and requesting your advice and medicine, while he neglected the one and never took the other? Well, you can easily take your revenge by making him pay for both. He, at all events, is not so bad as patients sometimes are who ask whether they *may* do that they have *already* done. "Pray, doctor," says a patient in a wheedling way, "don't you think I might take a glass of wine now?" "No — not yet — it would not be safe," says the doctor, with a solemn air. "Oh because I *did* take one yesterday, and it seemed to do me *so much* good!" I have heard a medical friend say that this sort of *ex post facto* justification, (at the doctor's expense too,) is the "unkindest" of all the cuts a doctor can receive from a patient.

An inhabitant of this world ought to wonder at nothing; at all events, pray keep any such emotion for greater rarities than human inconsistencies. The schism between the Pope and anti-Pope within us — between the Understanding and the Will, — the Head and the Heart, — the Conscience and the Passions, — the thoughts and the lips, is daily manifesting itself, in effects sometimes ludicrous, sometimes lamentable. A whole volume might be filled, not only with instances of maxims consciously contradicted by practice, (for if *these* were all recorded, "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written,") but of utterly unconscious inconsistency; of sense and wisdom often expressed in the dialects of folly — of vices that fancy themselves virtues, of religion masquerading itself in every form



of blind zeal and ferocious cruelty. We laugh at Goldsmith's soldier, expressing, in profane oaths, his fears for the extinction of religion, and at the debtor in jail, telling the said soldier, from behind the grating, that *his* chief alarm is for public liberty ; but though these are fictitious examples, they may be matched in the history of human nature, and do not go beyond it. Similarly Sheridan's Sir Anthony, who, in a towering passion, asks his son "what the devil good can passion do? Can't you be cool like *me*?" is a picture most of us have seen under some modifications or other. Parson Adams, enchanted with the sentiments of his travelling acquaintance as to that contemptible vice of "vanity," regrets, as he fumbles in his pocket, that he has left behind him the sermon in which he had endeavored to improve the topic, and which he would have felt such pleasure in reading to him ! It is by no means without a parallel.

A Scotch friend of mine was recently at a public dinner. A clergyman of the town was requested to "say grace." He did it, with unusual propriety. On sitting down, a young man whispered to my friend, with all the seriousness in the world, "A devilish good grace that !"

Another, talking to some Scotch "Andrew Fairservice," whose religious "assurance" (in more than one sense) was such that he professed to live without the shadow of a doubt, fear, or perplexity respecting his spiritual condition, asked him whether he really meant what he said ? — "De'il doot it, mon," was the reply.

There can be no doubt that Defoe had an unfeigned respect for morality and religion, and that he sincerely designed his writings to serve both. Yet how whimsical the practical inconsistency which led him to suppose that the "History of Moll Flanders," of "Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress," of "Colonel Jack," could by any possibility an-

swer this end! One would as soon expect virtue to be promoted by the “prurient” discussions of certain casuists whose canons for forming a superhuman purity contain, as Fuller wittily expresses it, “the criticisms of all obscenity.”

I met with a droll instance of practical inconsistency the other day in a sermon of my old favorite Jeremy Taylor. It is that on the “good and evil tongue.” He takes occasion to illustrate the text, “for every idle word we must give account;” and he does so by indulging in a whole paragraph of as idle words as ever came out of a preacher’s mouth. They are full of Latin quotations which must have been utterly unintelligible to his audience, and not a few of them very solemnly impertinent had they been otherwise. He completes a long tessellation from the Fathers by telling his wondering hearers “that St. Gregory calls every word vain or idle, *quod aut ratione justæ necessitatis aut intentione piæ utilitatis caret*; and St. Jerome calls it vain, *quod sine utilitate et loquentis decitur et audientis* — which profits neither the speaker nor the hearer.” He then duly confirms it by Chrysostom and Gregory Nyssen, and says it seems intimated in the word *κερον ῥῆμα* or *ῥῆμα ἄργόν*! Would that all inconsistencies of men were as trivial as these. But how shall we wonder at any, when we find thousands daily indulging in habits which they themselves are persuaded will ruin them, body and soul; and, while professing to desire happiness above all things, nevertheless persisting in walking right on with their eyes open in a path which they know beforehand can end only in misery?

Yours ever,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LVIII.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

LONDON, Tuesday, Oct. 18, 1849.

MY DEAR WEST,

You know my old failing;—always a little behind the clock, five minutes or so; or else the clock is always a little before me—I sometimes think that is the real secret of my seeming want of punctuality.

This failing suggested to me the other night a very absurd dream. Methought I was striding up Fleet street in the vain hope of overtaking an engagement the exact moment of which had already passed,—for I was, as usual, a little behind my time,—when I saw in a window, in large characters, the inscription, “Waste time sold here.” This, said I to myself, is the very thing for me; I will just step in and buy a quarter of an hour or so. But seeing other placards in the window, I stayed for a minute to examine them. “It does not matter,” said I to myself, “about the loss of a minute or two which I can now so easily repair.” I found the other notices of a piece with the first. In one place I read—“Some excellent lots of time,—consisting of a week and some days each,—to be immediately disposed of on the most advantageous terms,”—in another, fifty-two Sundays to be sold, a bargain,”—in a third, “the whole of that eligible month of February in leap year—twenty-nine days, to be sold; nothing charged for the odd day;” “Exchanges effected on the most reasonable terms—commission not exceeding five minutes *per cent.*” You will perhaps think I was a little surprised at all this; perplexed with sundry impossibilities which might be naturally supposed to stand in the way of such bargains and exchanges. You are mistaken; I felt no such surprise at all. The

only thing that surprised me was, that so admirable and reasonable an arrangement had not been hit upon long before. "In a world," said I to myself, "where money answereth all things, as the wise man saith, — where goods and chattels, houses and lands, character and fame, are all bought and sold, it is very strange that we should never have thought of buying and selling time before." Your only true logician is sleep. It can make you incontinently believe anything, and unsay, in an instant, every fact, maxim, and principle which you had held indisputable up to the very moment you laid your head upon your pillow. It can prove any conclusion it pleases from any premises, or, if need be, without any premises at all. It can do all that logicians say cannot be done, and convince logicians themselves that their logic is wrong. No wonder then that I was not startled to find that I could, if I pleased, purchase a quarter of an hour at a shop counter, and come away with it safe in my pocket. On my waking, I certainly regretted that there was no such office — for I dare say I should often have dropped in to do a little business. I could not help indulging myself in fancying some of the odd scenes we should witness if the time which hangs upon men's hands, and which they know not what to do with, were an exchangeable commodity, instead of being simply suffered to run to waste, like the water of a stream when the mill is not at work.

It would be surely convenient, if those who have more time than they want could sell it to those who can employ it, or think they can employ it, to better purpose; or if we could effect exchanges of time with mutual advantage. You have a day you know not what to do with — another wishes for two days in one; he has one a fortnight hence which he would be glad to part with — you exchange yours for it; and thus tedium would be prevented on both sides!

The last method, indeed, would be a reasonable bargain, and all could understand it, for human life would be none the shorter for it ; longer indeed, if we measure life (as we surely ought) rather by what we do and enjoy, than by the hours which pass in vacant indolence. But it might be imagined at first that none would have any time absolutely to *sell*. Is it credible, we are ready to ask, that beings who are continually complaining of the brevity of human life can be willing to make it shorter? Yet I make no doubt there would be plenty of business, even of this kind, for such an office to transact. We know but little of human nature, if we do not know that whatever it may say about the shortness of life, most men are firmly convinced that life is ten times too long ! Half our time is spent in devising methods of wasting it, and half the remaining half in putting them into execution. The only hours of life worth much, in the estimation of the giddy and thoughtless, are those spent in pleasures which they cannot cheaply and readily make for themselves, but which they must wait for time to bring them ; they know not how to fill up the interval with pleasures of their own creating, and so can rarely wait with patience. The moment they see a lively pleasure in prospect, — be it an hour, a day, or a month hence, — they think the interval between the present instant and its arrival, as worse than useless and would be glad to have it annihilated on any terms. Nothing would be more common, I dare say, if my imaginary office were in existence, than for a lover to sell whole weeks previous to the wedding, from the sheer impossibility of enduring the tedium ; while an alderman would gladly purchase a blissful oblivion for some hours before a turtle feast, to rid himself of the torment of expectation between the promise and the fulfilment. And as to Sundays, — how many a young scapegrace would sell the whole fifty-two in a bun-

dle, — except, perhaps, when Christmas Day falls on one of them? It is amusing, too, to think that, like all other markets, the time-market would have its fluctuations. There would be time when time would be a drug, and time when time would be dear — according to the season; as there are times for every thing, so there would be times for “time” itself; for though one hour is as like another as one egg is like another, and intrinsically of equal value, the supply and the demand must chiefly determine their price. In a season of pressing business or public merry-making, how would hours be at a premium, while Sundays and fast days, I suspect, would go almost for nothing! Many a young rogue, I doubt, would mortgage his whole church-time up to fifty years of age; while during Lent in Catholic countries, and the Ramadan in Mahometan, there would be an absolute glut, and the time-broker have more time on his hands than he would know what to do with.

So much the better, you may say, for those devout souls who would know the true value of time; who might steal into the market to purchase an additional day or two for spiritual pleasures; or haggle for a score or two of cheap Sundays to enable them to get through a folio or two of sermons and homilies! Such customers would be rare. No doubt, however, many would go with a long face, under the pretence of transacting such business, and employ the time which they got in a very different manner. A curious thing is the human heart; it likes to play the fool under the mask of wisdom, and to practise even vice, if possible, with the credit of virtue.

I had a droll example of human impatience in my dream. Methought a couple of demure looking persons, one a young man — the other a young woman — came in, and reversed what, I fancy, would be the usual proposals. Instead of wishing to sell the Sunday and buy the week, they

wished to pass the week in oblivion, and were impatient for the Sunday to come. I was almost betrayed into the folly of supposing it was out of sheer devotion. But it turned out that the banns of their marriage were to be published on that happy day for the last time!

One other thing in my dream, I must not forget. I asked if it was possible to sell the hours of sickness and sorrow: "Surely," said I, "they are burdensome enough." "They are so," was the reply, "but none can part with *them*. There is enough to do—to bear them with *patience*, and indeed they seldom last long enough to teach that lesson. It is only the hours which you would spend in yawning, in indolent vacuity, that it is permitted thus to barter away. Men will not part with their hours of pleasure—they think them too precious for that; and with their hours of suffering, they cannot; for Providence justly deems these more precious still. But people often make mistakes, and come to offer what they cannot part with, or to get rid of it under pretences." At this very moment there entered an old fellow, about sixty, with a curious twist on his countenance as though he were vainly trying to contort an expression of acute pain into a yawn of *ennui*. But just as he was saying that he had a fortnight of complete leisure to dispose of, a sharp twinge effectually banished his assumed expression of apathy, and extorted an exclamation by far too lively for *ennui*. "You, my friend," said the official at the counter, "have got quite enough to do for the present—you are in no condition to sell;—let me rather recommend you to buy an additional day or two that you may con the lessons of fortitude and patience a little more effectually." The sexagenarian declined this proposal. Would not you and I do the same?

Yours ever

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LIX.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

LONDON, Friday, Jan 4, 1830.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

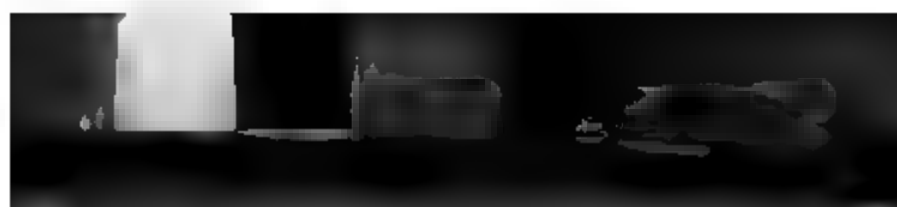
I have just had a mournful parting. The whole family of T — W — have gone to Australia. I saw them on board at Gravesend, and went a few miles down the river with them.

"England, with all thy faults," — but I think I have seen that quoted once, if not twice, before. Never mind; the sentiment will be ever young and fresh in our hearts, however hackneyed the poet's line; just as there are some strains of music which not all the vilest street hardy-gurdies in the world can make you hate, though you feel impatient enough with the poor vagabonds that so desecrate them.

Not but what imagination is sometimes beaten, and the sentimental fairly yields to the ludicrous; as when I heard a great raw-boned Scotchman, six feet high, bagpiping the other day to "I'd be a butterfly." It was impossible for even Ovid to imagine such a metamorphosis. If it had been "I'd be a kangaroo," or "a long-tailed monkey," or any other forest beauty of that kind, it would have been natural. But to return.

I did not envy the emigrants, and can scarcely imagine the stress of circumstances which would reconcile *me* to such a step. Yet they are happy in one point; they sail *en masse*. The whole family is uprooted, and gone to make another home at the Antipodes. They leave no near relations behind them. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, everything they held dear down to their favorite dog, all are gone; — all but the two loved ones that they leave alone





in the old familiar churchyard! Ah. how often, I will answer for it, — how often already has the mother visited, in fancy, that lone spot, and heard the whisper of the tall dark trees which edge its border and the rustling of the grass over the graves, even above the long swell of the Atlantic!

I was with the voyagers in imagination almost all last evening, and entered so deeply into sympathy with them, that when I slept I was still dreaming that I was on board.

I know not how I could bear the trial, since (I am half ashamed to say it) the very thought of it dissolved me in tears. Even if one is not about to quit one's country for ever, there is something profoundly melancholy in all the sights and sounds which surround one when parting on a distant voyage. As the sun goes down behind the fading hills, and the solemn stars come out to watch, and the melancholy surge keeps up its monotonous music, and the land breeze, with its faint smell of earth and flowers, wafts to us the last breath of home, — what a pensive hour is that! How eagerly does the eye watch the still twinkling lights on the shore, and the melancholy pencil of radiance from the lighthouse which streams fainter and fainter as the waves bear us on; how eagerly does the ear catch the sound even of a watch-dog on the hills! What, then, must be the feelings of those who thus gaze and listen for the last time; — as they lose the last twinkling lights, and drink in the last dying fragrance of their native fields! What a pang must they feel as vivid memory recalls the home of childhood, and the altars where their fathers worshipped! Methinks many a mother must feel a pang almost as of remorse and cruelty in leaving, in unvisited solitude, the ashes of those they have loved and lost.

"Pooh!" I fancy I hear you say, with your abominable practical sense. "I dare say these worthy folks were too busy

with pressing cares to suffer half as much as you fancy. Very likely they were all sea-sick ; and who was ever troubled with sentimental sorrows then ?”

Why, no ; I suppose *that* would be a ready cure. Though I never felt it, I imagine, from what I have heard people say, that a man enduring *that* misery, would not care if his whole generation were hanged. However, the tranquillity of the night allowed poor W—— and his family no such questionable antidote of sorrow. Neither do I wish them so ill as to hope that they escaped the pangs of parting : not to have felt them would argue them brutal, and such sorrows have a tendency “to make the heart better,” and soothe us while they lacerate.

And they will, at best, be passing shadows. In a few days — ay, in a few hours — the changing scenes, the novel sights, and sounds, and employments ; — the returning morning light, and the more cheerful aspect of the ocean under its beams, — above all, the obliteration of the last visible traces of home ; even the necessities of the body, — nay, by Ceres ! the vulgar thoughts of breakfast and the savory steams from the caboose ; well, well, — it is strange, but true. Man, that weeping, sighing, sorrowing, eating, drinking, laughing - thing, — is a curious phenomenon ; “that’s a fact.” In one little hour he shall shift his domicile from the head to the heart, and from the heart to the stomach, pass through all changes from agony and tears to smiles and mirth, and yet in all may be perfectly sincere.

W—— and his wife afford a noble proof of what a father’s and a mother’s love can do. They forswear civilization — for the sake of their young ones. They have looked the thing fairly and bravely in the face — and prefer hardships abroad, with rude plenty for their children, to straits and precarious prospects at home. They have therefore gathered up their little all, and propose to turn farmers on the

edge of the wilderness. They voluntarily descend to quasi-barbarism, that their young brood may flourish. They are wise in this, — that they go *in time*. Their children are too young to feel the change much; they will not have many habits to unlearn, and will scarcely know that their adopted, is not their native country. A more miserable spectacle can hardly be imagined than a grown up emigrant family, born to better prospects, resorting to such a life — the sons embarrassed with a “polite” education, and the daughters with the usual quota of accomplishments; both the one and the other being of about as much use in such a situation as silk stockings and cambric shirts. A father, a mother, may be capable of submitting without a murmur to the sacrifices enforced by such a change, rather than see their children starve. But where else can we find the heroism or the patience necessary to face it? . . . . .

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LX.

TO THE REV. J—— S——, MISSIONARY IN INDIA.

March, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,

Thank you very heartily for the gift of the version of the New Testament in the “Pushtoo or Affghan” language. I look on it with great reverence, though, when I open it, I am not quite sure whether or not I am looking at it upside down! But it will, I hope, speak to others, though it is dumb to me; at all events it is a *curiosity*, as we say. What an uncouth-looking character it is!

Though I can no more make use of the volume than a monkey of a watch, I can honor the faith and patience of

those who for so many years, amidst the neglect or contempt of the world, have been silently employed in mastering the Babel of this world's dialects, for the purpose of making the Bible the present polyglot of one hundred and fifty tongues! But courage; this task is in a great measure accomplished; and it was one of the most arduous and essential of all. It has been a long work, and it will be yet many years before it is perfectly accomplished.

This and all other labors of you and your devoted brotherhood, have been but the preparation for the great battle between the gospel and heathenism; it has been the scaffolding for the building. But, if I mistake not, things will proceed henceforth at a greatly accelerated pace. Not that the results, even now, are such as to disappoint any reasonable expectation, as one decisive fact fully shows. I see by the recent Reports of all our great missionary organizations, that a very appreciable portion of the funds — in one as much as a fifth — has come from the missionary communities themselves; From Polynesians, Hottentots, Hindoos, and Caffres! This fact is most significant, and speaks for itself in language which cannot be mistaken: for men will give their words for nothing, but when they give their money, they are infallibly in earnest. When, in addition to such facts as these, I consider that the word of God is in almost every dialect of man; that the world no longer frowns on your enterprise, but condescends to take an interest in it; that the most powerful governments, but especially our own, are no longer hostile, but favorable; when I consider, further, that God seems giving such an immeasurable superiority in power, wealth, science, and art to the community of Christian nations as cannot but insure them the moral mastery of the world, — an indirect, but most momentous advantage, as you justly say, it is impossible not to anticipate a bright futurity for you.

One of the most hopeful symptoms is the attempt you and other missionaries are making to qualify *native* converts to be teachers of their countrymen. I wonder that it should not have been made from the very first. This was the primitive, and is the only rational method of evangelization. Till this be adopted, not only must missionary operations be most expensive, and lavish of life, — for the agents must be supported at a great distance and exposed to unfriendly climates; — but, for both reasons, the number of such agents will be utterly inadequate. And, at best, the agents themselves must always work at an immense disadvantage as compared with native teachers. It is not in human nature to listen attentively to truth from lips that utter it in stammering accents; and it must be years before the missionary can speak his adopted language with fluency and accuracy. I sometimes imagine to myself the unconscious blunders, — no doubt often ludicrous enough, — nay, the downright though most innocent errors, heresies, and blasphemies, which have fallen from the missionary's lips in his early efforts. I am afraid the Gospel, if *we* were heathens, would stand but a poor chance of being listened to with attention if a foreigner came to preach it to us in broken English, with a foreign pronunciation and a foreign idiom; if one told us, with the Frenchman, "Dat de evan-gile was come from heaven to be a book of revelation of the will Divine, and to cause to repent a man of all his sins;" or with the German, "Dat it vos a melancholy ever-by-man-to-be-remembered fact dat we vos all but *cucumbers* of de ground!"

Come now, confess the truth. Do you not fancy that many a young Christian missionary, with more zeal than knowledge, has thus acquired without inspiration, a gift of speaking *unknown* tongues?

The immense advantage of the native teacher is that he

has no such difficulties; and if a true convert, and intelligently convinced of the essential truths of Christianity, he would in all probability more than make amends for his partial ignorance by his possession of the vehicle of communication. Of course there is a period during which a missionary colony, like other colonies, must be supported by the "mother country;" but it is my sincere belief that in many cases, the system of nursing has been continued too long. In many fields of missionary enterprise, if we may trust Reports (and as to some of the Polynesian islands we *know* it is so,) the converts have been very numerous for many years. Surely the object of the missionaries should have been to train some of them to teach the Gospel they had received—to dismiss them to their work—to leave just a sufficient staff of missionaries to aid in training other converts, and then at once to break new ground. This, at all events, was the Apostolic method. To supply the Christian colonies, which consist of these converts, with teachers from the other side of the world for thirty or forty years together, seems to me as needless as it is inexpedient; likely to keep them always cripples, and to rob still untaught heathen of the benevolence to which these last have equal claims. I am rejoiced therefore to find that you are training, at once, the first converts on whom you can depend for sincerity and sense, to the work of teaching their countrymen; and, in short, that you are resolved to be, in a modest way, the head of a College as well as a minister of the Gospel. I heartily wish all our great societies would set up a college for this purpose in every considerable field of enterprise.

Well, go on and prosper; it is a noble career in which you are engaged: and so it ought to be, when I reflect on the ties it rends asunder, and the sacrifices it involves. Ah! my friend, I shall never see you more in this world;

and as I think of the days never to return — of the walks and talks of our early years — tears involuntarily fill my eyes. How strange it seems that the besotted world was so long in seeing that no man would choose such things as a Missionary encounters, and that such sacrifices as yours are at least entitled to grateful and reverent mention, even if judged to be the effect of an erring enthusiasm.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXI.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

GREAT BARR, Thursday, April 4, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have looked into the bulky volumes you were so obliging as to send me — for my amusement, as you facetiously say! I would as soon eat sawdust as read them. Even if it were not a dishonest book, a vain parade of erudition; if the author's learning were as profuse as he would have his quotations imply, its perusal would still be intolerable to a man of sense. Here are two huge volumes of more than five hundred pages each, and nearly half those pages contain only some ten lines of text, the rest made up of closely printed notes in double columns, bristling with citations and references! Each page reminds me of Ichabod Crane, with his diminutive head resting on a pair of stilt-like shanks. I calculate there are at least five thousand references which purport to be the result of independent investigation. Now in looking at a few pages only, I see a great many that must have been merely copied from previous writers; many others that really are nothing to the purpose, and many more which remit us to authors so inac-

cessible, obscure or worthless, that they could only have been introduced for ostentation's sake, or because the author was sure they would never be hunted up. But it was enough that they would appear to have weight though they had none, or at least evince the author's learning, when they really show nothing but his pedantic vanity. Those authors who have a simple desire to establish their point, never needlessly accumulate citations or references. When the thesis is such that authority is essential, or auxiliary to it, they will, even then, content themselves with the *minimum* of citations that will answer the purpose. They reckon them by weight, not by number, — by the scales, not by the bushel. Indeed when one has cited two or three names, which so far as authority can effect any thing at all, are *instar onerium*, of what use is it to appeal to a score or more of mediocrities? If we can cite Aristotle why go to Keckermannus — if Bacon, how shall we further confirm the statement by appeal to Kettwigions? Not only is a large part of the citations in these volumes mere stuffing; we cannot but feel assured that a great number are simply pillaged from previous writers. It must be so, if we consider what is implied in their being honestly quoted. Those authors who know their proper business, know that to hunt up a passage, to determine its real relevance, to read for the purpose what goes *before*, and what comes *after* (and not, as many have done, take, by mere haste, an *objection* the cited author is just going to refute, for his own opinion and a sanction of ours!) requires time; to transcribe the passage or the reference, to verify it properly in the proof, and see that it is still accurate in the last revise, requires more; so that we are sure the task which so many learned pedants, in such books as you have sent me, would pretend they had honestly performed, is a task only for a Methuselah. For this reason, as well as for the



others already mentioned, an honest author will be as parsimonious of his references and citations as possible — not as profuse.

Thousands of such books as this, have the pedants among our German neighbors produced; amongst us they are happily rare. The folly of ostentatious learning has indeed its day at some period or other, in the development of every national literature; it had in ours two hundred years ago. But I think it is not likely to revive: at least it is to be hoped so.

For what at the best is the use of such books? They are not read: how can they be? Their only effect is to produce in a sciolist here and there an impression that the author of a mere farrago is a very learned man; and perhaps, where the subject is one of controversy, an impression that the cause he advocates is impregnably fortified. It is so, as far as such books can fortify it; for who can confute what nobody will read?

As to reading them it is out of the question. What can your progress (every clause cut into two by references) be compared to except bump, — bump, — bumping, in a rough cart, over the frozen furrows of a ploughed field? What mortal patience is equal to the task of reading page after page constructed on the model of such sentences as this, if I may venture to imitate the inimitable:

“It is surely a mystery (*Jamblich. de Mysteriis: Gr. et Lat. Ed. Th. Gale. Oxon. 1678, passim*) that you should give to a friend (*Plat: Phileb: 13 c.; Theætet. 143 B. Ed. G. Stallbaum; Aristot. Ethic. Nicom. lib. viii. Cap. 1 — 13 Ed. Im. Bekker*; or indeed even to an acquaintance (*Ciceronis de Amicitia. pp. 1 — 49, Ed. Joh. Guldenschaff; Theophrast. frag. περὶ φιλίας*) a book that is incomprehensible (*ἀκατάληπτον, vide Philonis de Somn. pp. 360 — 369; Procli in Theologiam Plat: lib. v. passim*;) even

in its elements, (*στοιχεία*); the perusal of which, (*vide Faciolati in voc. perlegere*): must involve pure waste of time (*Kettwigii de Usu Temporis*, vol. x. fol. p. 1 — 1098: *Test. Vet. et. Nov. passim*) and make us angry (*vide Schellhorn in Amœnitat. Litt.* tom. ii. pp. 1 — 532) rather than pleased with the lender."

Pray, my dear friend, study this last sentence, carefully looking up all the references and ascertaining their relevance; and remember in your next loan of books that life is but *short*; and that as of the writing of *many* books, so sometimes of the reading even of *one*, "there is no end."

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G

## LETTER LXII.

TO MRS. L. B., IN NEW ZEALAND.

LONDON, Jan. 1851

MY DEAR LOUISE,

I was amazed by the unusual length of your last letter received last week, crossed, absolutely crossed, — a thing, I think, in these penny-post days, I have hardly seen these ten years. I dare say it may be discovered in the letters of lovers, possibly also (as in our case) between *very* dear friends who chatter to each other across the equinoctial line, or endeavor to keep their love from starving by a yearly letter, like the "Friends' Annual Epistle," between the St. Lawrence and the Cape of Good Hope, or "Auld Reekie" and Canton.

Many thanks to you for it. I assure you I accept it as a greater proof of affection than if you had sent the choicest curiosities of your adopted country. It pleased me better than a genuine war-club, wielded by the redoubtable arm of

Wahitabahao, (which means, my dear, "the Son of a Gun," as you may see by consulting any of the native lexicons;) or a sheaf of arrows tipped with fish-bone; or a pickled head of some renowned captive, which the New Zealand gentry had preserved as a trophy; or a grotesque plumed head-dress by which some diabolical-looking war-chief vainly tried to add to the horrors of his visage, furrowed with the tattoo and the deeper signature of demoniacal passions. Nay, I value your handwriting even more than if you had sent (what I rather affect than any such grim *souvenirs*) a pot or two of the most tempting preserved fruits, or a barrel of the finest New Zealand pippins. Yet, if your affection, my dear Louise, so seeks to express itself, pray do not balk it. The language of symbols is always expressive; and if the language of flowers be edifying, what must that of fruits be? If a Persian lady, instead of greeting her lover with roses and lilies, were to manœuvre with dates and guavas, how much deeper the impression she would make on her innamorato. — Your letter, notwithstanding all its intersections, and, forgive me, my dear, its occasional meanderings and waving deflections from absolute parallelism, was all duly read; though I deny not that some parts required careful and frequent adjustment of my spectacles. I despair of emulating your copiousness, but I am sure I return your affection.

The truth is, the mere toil of writing is becoming increasingly burdensome, and therefore odious to me, every day. I sometimes wish that all the world wrote and read shorthand. It would be at least a prodigious saving of time and labor. And why, by the way, should it not be a universal accomplishment? Nay, I believe it will, some day. It were easy to superadd this little trifle to the dozen other things, which children, with that wonderful plasticity and activity of the imitative faculties which God, for wisest pur-

poses, has given to their age, so easily acquire. It is really nothing compared with learning to walk, or to talk, or to read (since that art, once learned, is itself auxiliary to learning short-hand), or to play on the piano. An intelligent child of eight would master its chief difficulties in twenty lessons, and at that age, would have time to become skilled in the art of reading it, — which, by the way, is to adults the chief difficulty. Nay, ordinary lesson books might soon be printed in it.

What an economy of time, patience, paper, and ink, the revolution would effect! Methinks I see the results. What sweet little *billet-doux* which no dove need be employed to carry, but which might be wafted on the wing of a butterfly! What delicious little note-paper should we see, 160mo, and envelopes of the size of a peascod! Farewell all lumbering books and huge collections; we should literally have "pocket libraries;" a gentleman might carry half the plays of Shakspeare in one waistcoat pocket, and all Milton in the other; while a whole Bodleian almost would go into his great-coat. Your good husband might have put the huge Encyclopædia, about which he was so terribly anxious, into his portmanteau. Prithee set about learning and reading it without delay.

To be sure we must expect, should this great revoition be effected, to hear something about "vested rights," as in all such cases; of printers and paper makers perishing of starvation, just as the old stage-coachmen were to do when railroads were opened! Petitions will perhaps be presented for the taxing of all short-hand books. If any such tax be imposed, let us hope that it will be in the ratio of their cubical contents; in that case the impost will not be ruinous.

Shall we have the penny ocean-postage? I think we can scarcely expect it; nor as a financial measure would it be

wise. Twopence or threepence, however, would do well, and that is surely little enough to pay for sending a missive to the Antipodes. I have not the shadow of a doubt that such a rate as that would pay its expenses, and, after a time, even yield a fair revenue; for we are but at the beginning of the immense intercourse which will soon bring all islands and continents into close neighborhood; everybody will soon have friends and relatives everywhere, and the facilities of communication will jog memory. In a little time, more thoughts will be exchanged, more love breathed from one end of the earth to the other in a month, than formerly travelled between London and Edinburgh in a whole century. It is no doubt sweet thus to converse, but I still hanker for an improvement. I long for an occasional peep at you by an "Electric-Telegraph Trip-train," and above all, I want the Electric Telegraph itself to the other world, and have a message now and then from those dear ones we have loved and lost. Oh! what a luxury would *that* be. But it cannot be. I can talk to you on the other side of the equator, but from that dread land of silence, divided only by the "narrow stream of death," on the frontiers of which we ever stand, and into which we may any moment glide, we can hear no tidings, and can send none thither. You see the old wound still rankles.

And yet I am both presumptuous and ungrateful in talking thus. I am *presumptuous* in saying "I can talk to you at the Antipodes;" for at this very moment, my heart whispers that you (and the thought chills as I write it) may already have passed into the world of shadows, or *I* may be a shadow before you read this; and I am *ungrateful*, for if our hearts are where they ought to be, and where our professed "treasure" is, there will be no lack of sympathy and communion between us and heaven; if we cannot hold intercourse with departed friends, we can with Him "in whom

they abide," and who will not forget either them or us, as long as we forget not Him. And when we can truly feel thus, we need no celestial "telegraph" any longer; at least I can truly say, and nothing can wrest this experience from me, that quicker than steam, than light, than electricity—even as quick as *thought*, God is present with us when, in the full repose of a child's love and faith, we desire to be present with Him.

Thus may you and I, dear Louise, often hold intercourse with Him, and through Him, with one another; thus may we often see the patriarch's vision, "of angels ascending and descending," busy in the ministries of love to us in this the land of our pilgrimage; and, at last, when we go hence to the world beyond, may we see those "shining ones" who have preceded us thither, coming down to the margin of the "dark river" to welcome us with harp and song, as in the immortal allegory of old John Bunyan. And now for a little family gossip before I close.

. . . . Your old friend, Matilda M——, is about to be married. After living so many years, without doing any execution in the world, it is odd that she should thus transfix a heart at the age of forty-two. Yet I find I have been guilty of two improprieties in a breath; for how do I know but she may have, in her desk, half a dozen tributes from admiring swains twenty years ago; and, in truth, if she attracted none in her bloom, I am sure Cupid must be (as he is represented) blind; for, I fancy, few women could have been more agreeable, and if never handsome, she must have had pleasing features. You will doubtless think it a yet more deadly sin against courtesy, that I should talk thus at random about a lady's age. But, indeed, my dear, I still spoke discreetly; I said forty-two, and I judged so *by lady's measure*; for, to my certain knowledge, she was forty-five, more than a year ago, according to the reckoning of man's

more fleeting years. But ladies' measure of time is by a wand which is truly an enchanter's wand. A year is a variable quantity, and increases as they advance. Up to twenty-five I do not observe any difference between a lady's year and a gentleman's. It is a just annual revolution of the sun from the first point of Aries to the same again, neither more nor less. From twenty-five to thirty, it is, as near as I can guess, about a year and a-half, as we men count years; from thirty to forty the dear creatures seldom advance a year under three of ours; and from forty to five and forty, they have a natal day about once in every five years; after that time, each year is an immense lapse of duration, and, in point of fact, I suppose that there are very few ladies that ever do get beyond fifty. Depend upon it, that Methuselah's wife was but fifty when *he* was in his nine hundredth year!

Nay, I have known cases, where ladies, like the planets, have not only had their stationary points, but their retrogradations; they have to all appearance travelled back from five and thirty to thirty, and then started forward again.

Ask your friend Mrs. Dawson, who went out to New Zealand at nineteen, and who ought now, therefore, to be just thirty-eight. Rely on it, you will find that she is but twenty-nine or thirty at most; and if she *appears* older, it is all the climate, my dear — that horrid climate . . .

. . . . . With kindest regards to your husband,

Ever yours affectionately,

B. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXIII.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for your note, introducing Mr. L——; for it is always pleasant to hear from you, though in the present case I should have been better pleased had the letter come by her Majesty's servant in the red coat.

I assure you that, for *your* sake, I did my best to do the civil thing by your friend, and, I hope, not unsuccessfully. But, in short, we did not take; you take me. By the way, there is a double idiom for a despairing foreigner to gape at!

You will say, perhaps, it might be owing to an inopportune hour for his visit, or some other casual circumstance. Perhaps so, in part. He *did* happen to drop in when I was very busy; and, what is worse, he stayed an hour and a half, which I could ill spare. We talked for some time on the proverbial platitudes which form the usual introductions among Englishmen,—the weather—the prospects of the harvest—the public health, and half a dozen other topics, which, though very important, no one cares a doit about, and which do not tend to make our company less irksome; and then, when we got to others, your friend seemed to me a little *crotchety*, and of the two,—crotchets or platitudes,—you know I decidedly prefer the latter, dreadful as I admit the dilemma to be. Something then, I allow, may be due to all this; but not all. Your friend is a decided gentleman, affable, intelligent; but if you ask me further, why,—especially as backed by so potent an introduction,—I did not take to him more warmly, I can make you no other answer



than *Je ne sais pas* ; or quote those old lines of our school days which seem to me to contain a good deal of latent philosophy : —

“I do not like you, Dr. Fell,  
The reason why, I cannot tell ;  
But this I know, and know full well,  
I do not like you, Dr. Fell.”

“Stuff! prejudice!” methinks I hear you say; “and so you permit your heart to harbor unkind thoughts towards a stranger, on account of such silly prepossessions as these!” Stop a minute, Mr. Lecturer. Who said a word of unkindness, or even of prejudice, if that is to imply any degree of ill-will? Can you not imagine such a thing as a purely intellectual antipathy? a want of some correspondencies of taste, of sentiments, of association, which shall render intimacy as impossible as though the parties spoke different languages? Nay, more so, for minds may be congenial — the eyes and features may show it, actions may confirm it, when the tongue cannot. Cannot you, I say, imagine all this? can you not imagine that two men may respect each other very much, and yet wish one another at Jericho? I am sure I can; nay, I am conscious of sometimes feeling it. There is your friend, now. I would as soon do him a kind turn, if I had it in my power, as any one else of my species, (not reckoning, of course, my intimate friends,) but if we two were the only inhabitants in the world, I should wish — except when we might be of substantial use to one another — that we might see as little of each other as possible; showing ourselves once a month, say, on the opposite sides of a broad river, or two opposite mountain-peaks, and making each other a profound salaam, by aid of a tele-

scope, in token of our continued existence, respect, and good will.

There are cases where all genial intercourse, and so all the essential pre-requisites of friendship, are out of the question; and this even where you believe another, in whom you find them not, much better than yourself; nay, whom it would require but a very little mending and darning of a few holes in their humanity to clothe in a suit which a decent sort of angels might not be absolutely ashamed of.

Friendship, my friend, is as some one has said, — or if he has *not* said, I will say it for him; — no, now I think of it, I believe it was said of Matrimony (which, by the way, is friendship, *plus* a circumstance or two) — friendship, I say, is like a plum pudding, a conglomerate of a highly complex and artificial character. Benevolence, indeed, must be its *basis*, like plums in the pudding; but there may be benevolence without friendship, though there cannot be friendship without benevolence (see Aristotle's *Ethics*, Cicero de *Amicitia*, and, in short, every other moralist, which I think about as useful a reference as many that the learned are in the habit of giving), and so, in addition to these plums, there are a score of other ingredients to be mingled in due proportion; to say nothing of a very long concoction, and even the *pudding-bag* of proximity, or at least oft-renewed presence (see Aristotle again, and *not* all authors this time, for the remark is original), without which friendship becomes a very wishy-washy thing; — like that plum-soup which a Turkish ambassador, ambitious of giving his English guests an English dish, presented in a tureen; in which indeed all the ingredients of a plum-pudding — or rather the disbanded “molecules” of one — were floating, and in exact proportions too. The ambassador had unhappily

forgotten in his orders to the cook the insignificant, but indispensable bag.

However, the presence of many ingredients, though they are not all equally essential, is necessary for the pudding; and it is even so also with friendship; and I maintain that there may be, and often is, an innate antipathy of mind, sentiment or taste, without any ill-will or prejudice in the world, which makes it impossible that two men should ever be friends; no, not even by the most prolonged concoction — or the very best pudding-bags in existence.

Well, well, you say, it will be different in heaven, at all events. There, all intellectual as well as all moral antipathies will be done away with, and everybody will be everybody's friend. "I am no sae sure o' that," as that deaf old Scotchman said, who was so fond of disputation that he used to launch this formula of obstinacy, if he only *saw* any one of the company making a strong affirmation, and whether he heard it or not. That nobody will be anybody's *enemy* in heaven, I grant; that "love unfeigned," true benevolence (glorious world!) will be constant and universal, I have no manner of doubt; — that there will also be all the amenities of social life, — such true *politesse* that even a Frenchman shall acknowledge, without any hypocrisy of compliment, that the inhabitants of heaven are "les gentilshommes les plus polis dans tout le monde," — not excepting even Paris, — all this I believe; but whether there will not be the same intellectual *sympathies* necessary for the formation of close friendships, I have my doubts; — in other words, I doubt whether the manufacture of moral plum-puddings may not go on in that world as well as this, and whether, while plums shall be still the basis, concoction and pudding-bags may not be needed just as much as now. I don't know how it may be with you, but I can fancy a man saying even in heaven :

"Do you know angel So and So? He is really a most worthy, excellent, estimable angel, but somehow we can't get on well together; he is a fine tall creature; of a noble presence; has beautiful wings; flies well; but, to speak the truth, he is a shade too musical for me; is too fond of his singing; will sing you through the 119th Psalm without stopping, and then begin again; or—he is a little too light and airy, will come flying through my open window when I would rather be alone, or alight, like some swallow in our old world, upon my roof, and twitter and chirp there, of course most divinely, for the hour together; or—he is a thought too prosy, and bores me a little with *philosophy*; or—he is too knowing, and has been here too long to enable me to understand him fully; he is always recurring to that little tour he made of the universe fifty thousand years ago; or—he is too much of a *virtuoso* for my taste, and is full of that inimitable collection of cockleshells, flies, and the sixty thousand species of amaranth which he has gathered from two thousand different worlds; or—he is too much of a Public Angel for me. He is always for dragging me to great 'assemblies' and New Jerusalem 'gatherings,' when I would rather spend half of my time in some quiet nook of the 'everlasting hills,' and muse alone." All this I say I can *imagine*: I can imagine that even in heaven "tastes differ;" but the beauty of the place will be, that tastes shall give no offence, for no one will be offended with you for not sympathizing with them. Yes—will you, can you believe it?—you may actually stop angel A in his singing, at the hundredth stanza, and he won't take any offence at it. You may say that you do not altogether sympathize with angel B's dearest friend, and he won't think the worse of you for it. Pray *take the hint*.

Yes! my dear friend; perfect congeniality in all *moral*

tastes, perfect sincerity, and perfect superiority to offence, will be heaven itself; but depend on it there will be varieties of *other* tastes, and therefore degrees of sympathy, and therefore degrees of intimacy, there as here; and so, (which is not least to be prized,) I shall have the precious privilege of my solitary, but no longer morose, humors; of sometimes being for whole days quite alone; and not as you, with your more jovial and musical tastes, imagine, always in a crowd, chirping, singing, twanging harp-strings, clapping wings, and performing celestial "sonatas." But I grant *all* will be good — whether in company or solitude — and *that* will be heaven; it is *not* flat uniformity, identity of feeling, monotony of employment. There is truth, I firmly believe, in the conceptions of our great bard as to unexpected analogies between heaven and earth. Nay, is it not Raphael himself who speaks in the divine poem? Milton is but his "Reporter." . . . .

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXIV.

TO THE SAME.

July 29, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I little thought when I wrote to you last that I should so soon see the counterpart of the litigious deaf Scotchman I mentioned. Surely, however possessed with the spirit of controversy and contradiction, he could hardly surpass a travelling companion I met with the other day on the top of a coach — there are few such now — between Grantham and Melton Mowbray. My positive friend broke in with doubt or flat contradiction, no matter what was said, — not exactly like the Scotchman, without *hearing*,

but, what comes to much the same thing, whether he *understood* what was said or not. What an odd humor it is, and yet a not unfrequent trait of character.

On finding how egregiously this humor of opposition possessed him, and that nothing could be started but he threw himself into a pugilistic attitude, I could not resist the temptation to play a little on his foible by gently giving the conversation a *curve* when he had made some strong assertion, and so coming round to an appearance of *agreeing* with him; no sooner done, than I immediately found he was quite as ready to maintain nearly the opposite of his former position. In short, his tongue, like the point of a weathercock, boldly veered round, and faced the prevailing wind, no matter what quarter it might blow from.

It was some time before I discovered this ingenious method of making him agree with himself and me too, and so relieving our journey of that annoyance which a perpetual wrangle between two people who cannot run away from one another must needs occasion.

We talked of the weather (of course), of the crops (of course too), of the Russian interference in the affairs of Hungary, of the Queen's projected visit to Ireland and Scotland, of the cholera; but I found that whatever I said I must necessarily be in the wrong.

In very weariness I thought it advisable sometimes to nod a seeming acquiescence in what he said; and I almost think he would have quarrelled with my *nod*, if he could; but whenever I attempted to modify his statements into something near what I could agree with, I was favored with a defence (not very valid, I admit) of my own formerly expressed opinions. Among other things, I happened to remark that I thought it curious that after such immense researches, in all parts of the world and among the most sagacious of the medical profession, into the nature and

causes of the cholera, so little light had been thrown on the subject. He, of course, did *not* think it at all strange; and said (what was true enough) that the real causes of almost all diseases are difficult to ascertain. I admitted the justice of the remark; and said that, perhaps, considering *that*, we ought to wonder rather that medicine had made so much progress than that it had made no more; he was disposed to *doubt* that observation, and thought that “considering their long and patient researches” (just what I had started with in relation to a particular case!) much more might have been done by the unlucky doctors.

I said that it must be very difficult to form a correct diagnosis of disease, considering the complex and evanescent phenomena to be observed, and remarked that the very representations of the patient himself might often mislead. I have heard, said I, laughing, physicians affirm that they would rather attend a baby that could not speak, than an adult — whose very absorption in his own sensations, and his exaggeration of them, might put medical sagacity on a false scent! I told him, (what was true enough,) that I had seen a Latin Essay, written by a young physician on taking his diploma, which expressly maintained this paradoxical thesis. He thought at once that a physician must be a *blockhead* to say so; for surely it must be of great advantage to be able to get an articulate answer to his questions — instead of listening only to inarticulate cries. I *admitted* it, and said that doubtless, on the whole, a patient must be allowed to be a pretty good judge of his own sensations, and in general would give a tolerably accurate account of his symptoms. He was not so *sure* of that, and declared that a wise physician should trust very little to his patient’s information, and treat him much as if he was a child!

Now there is a sense, no doubt, in which all these obser-

vations may be true enough under certain limitations and modifications. They are among the "antitheta" (as Bacon would say) which will furnish rhetorical common-places on both sides. The drollery was to see how eagerly my acquaintance always took the opposite.

Thus delightfully, my dear friend, did we go on in this pleasant game of conversational see-saw. I cannot give you any idea of the *manner* of Mr. Positive; it was prompt and absolute — "decisive and clear, without one if or but" — as if his speeches had been expressly framed on this principle: "Whatever you say now, I will contradict it; and if you agree with me, I will contradict myself! Only let me hear you say anything that I will not contradict!" and except you had told him that he was a very wise man, in which case you would have told a great fib, I scarcely think you could have found the proposition in which he would have agreed with you. His very image was the Irishman, who, despairing of a *shindy* at a fair, — everything *threatening* to end in unwelcome and unwonted tranquillity, — took off his coat, and trailing it in the mud, said, "And by St. Patrick, wouldn't I like to see the boy that would tread on that same!"

I think I have met with men equally fond of contradiction, — of taking the other side, — but they in general wonderfully soften and disguise the humor by polite periphrases and delicate circumlocutions. "Pardon me, but I really think" — "I should agree with you entirely, but" — "I acknowledge there is a great deal of force in that observation, only" — "I am surprised to hear a person of your evident good sense ——" It is astonishing how much better these things sound than "I do not think so" — "I am of quite a different opinion" — "that is a mistake." But it is an odd humor at the best; more odd, though scarcely more agreeable than an opposite trait of character — I mean the



timid vacillation which defers to every opinion. These two sets of characters ought by rights to go always together, for their reciprocal annoyance, — one subjected to the humiliation of perpetual assent, the other to the equal misery of never encountering an antagonist!

I was reminded, in the neighborhood of Muston, of Crabbe. I was anxious, if it might be, to catch a glimpse, as we rode along, of the house he used to live in. I asked the coachman of his "whereabouts." He looked thoughtfully for a moment, and then said, "Crabbe — Crabbe — I never heerd on him, sir: I don't know of no such person in these parts." "The poet" — said I, "the poet!" He shook his head, and then turning to a farmer behind, said, "This gentleman wants to know where one Mr. Crabbe lives." Ye gods! *one* Mr. Crabbe, as if there were a dozen! The farmer was not more enlightened. Only think of it; Crabbe, dead not yet twenty years; barely thirty since he last lived in that neighborhood; and yet, though his name has traversed England and America, it may be unknown, it seems, at his own threshold. "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and his own house."

Much the same answer I got from a worthy farmer of whom I inquired, in a pilgrimage many years ago to Chalfont St. Giles, — "Which was Milton's cottage?" He replied that he did not know of any man of that name thereabouts; but that he *might* live in one of the new houses a little further on; some strangers had come lately! By the way, I fear the little room over the porch in which the blind poet wrote (it is said) the "Paradise Regained," during the plague of London, exists no longer.

Yours ever affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXV.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

ISLE OF SKYE, July 26, 1851.

MY DEAR MASON,

Your cousin has just arrived — out with such a load of packages that I hardly know how he will manage to stow them away in the Lilliputian apartment provided for him in my modest lodgings here. Three boxes, two portmantenaus! — the former almost wholly filled with books! I tell him I am persuaded it is nothing but ostentation, — the very Pharisaism of scholarship which has made him come with such a retinue of authors at his heels; for who ever did, would, or could study much amidst mountain scenery?

But I will be charitable withal; for I remember well that, in my younger days I made similar vain provision, under like circumstances, for that intellectual appetite which never came, or which would only languidly toy with a page or two at a time, and to which a couple of volumes, and twice as many pamphlets would have been a Bodleian. Yet have I lugged with me into the mountains scores of books never to be read; — a specimen or two of my favorite poets, — three or four volumes of philosophy, — only think of metaphysics under the shadow of Schehallion or Ben Nevis! — a modest sprinkling of Greek and Latin Classics — a few books of history and romance, — in short, a well selected library *in petto*. The delusion is something like that of certain provident old ladies going a voyage for the first time, in the "Margate Hoy" days. What hampers of provender — what choice ham, veal-pie, potted-beef, and bottles of wine and ale! But ah! a roll or two

of the vessel as she got beyond the Nore,—and how superfluous did all this foresight appear.

It is much the same with our intellectual provender in such scenes as we have here, though the loss of appetite arises from a pleasanter cause. As long as the weather is fine, who can think of poring over his books, and after an excursion to distant mountain or glen, who is not too weary for it? Yet (*horresco referens*) the books *may* be of service. I shudderingly recollect—six—ten days of continuous down-pour in this very Elysium, and then, what a treasure were a few books and a gray goose quill! But a very few will do; and as to writing,—a good deal may be scribbled on a couple of quires of paper. But this library of your cousin, why it looks, (*absit omen!*) it *looks*, I say, as though the fellow had made up his mind that we *shall* have wet weather. However, let me hope that it may rather be an amulet against it. When you go out without an umbrella, the clouds, they say, are certain to take sly advantage of your folly, and drench you to the skin. What perpetual sunshine may we not expect when their malice sees that we are thus fortified within doors against *ennui*!

He tells me that on wet days, we can read some of the tougher books together,—another delusion; I fancy we shall hardly dip into them; we may perhaps condescend to lounge through a novel or so; but as to regular study it must be let alone. Two people are sure to converse rather than read, or read only to converse. I remember once sitting down with a very dear friend to a pamphlet which had just come out, on a subject in which we both felt an interest. Something in the very first page suggested some doubt on my part; it was expressed; the propriety of my *doubt* was *doubted* on his;—the disputed point soon became, under the clearing effects of debate, a certainty with him,—with me palpably false; and after wrangling the whole morning

in that preliminary discussion, we closed the yet uncut pamphlet, and rushed out into the glorious sunshine, wishing the pamphlet, its author, and our discussion at the Antipodes.

"What an intellectual epicure the love of the picturesque has made you," — I fancy I hear you say. Not a whit; — but I confess I like to spend these little intervals of delicious idleness — this "honeymoon" of the Soul and Nature, as little pestered by either business or literature as may be. So I do not intend to let your cousin study much; though that I fancy, will not give me much trouble, for in three days his books will be as much forgotten as if he had left them at home. As it has been rather a hazy, drizzling morning, however, he has been busy in unpacking and arranging, them, and evidently thinks he has done a clever thing in dragging all this lumbering weight of dead men's brains with him. He has paid handsomely for land carriage, I promise you. "Books give us no trouble," says Cicero, "they delight us at home and don't hinder us when we go abroad:" — "Delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernocrant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur."

I am not so sure of that, friend Cicero. I fancy Master Francis could tell a different story, and that a chest of books — enough to break down a luggage-train — and of a weight, figuratively, beyond all computation, is a very serious addition to a traveller's "impedimenta."

We shall not, I think, leave this beautiful spot unless it be for a week's run or so across the Kyles to Glen Urquhart and Glen Shiel. But we *squat* here, as they say in Australia, and the term is hardly too Australian for our primitive lodgings, — the best we can procure however. I love to see a gem of an island like this in perfection; and the only way to do so, is to locate yourself in a convenient place, and radiate in successive excursions, day by day, to

all the most charming points of scenery, whether of mountain, sea, glen, or stream, — surveying them all from their best aspects in all the glorious variety of light and shadow, cloud and sunshine, morning or evening tints, — and so daguerreotyping each scene for ever on your memory. I have been to Loch Coriskin, dark under the savage shadows of those singularly abrupt and gloomy mountains of green granite; but I hope to go often again. The spot well deserves all the admiration Scott has bestowed on it, in his “Lord of the Isles,” though his description hardly conveys an exact impression. O that you could join us! But I suppose that is impossible. Your patients, like all other foolish sick people, *will* have the notion that the doctor is essential to them, — when, I dare say, they would get on just as well without him, — not to say a great deal better! However, whether they have any need of *you* or not, I suppose you have need of *them*; — so I shall say no more about it, except that I heartily wish there might come such a season of public health as would allow the doctors to look after their own. But I forget; that would be worse than all; you would doubtless be found bemoaning the general health more than the Great Plague itself.

I remember hearing of a sexton and a doctor *condoling* with each other at a casual meeting in a churchyard, on the perverse salubrity of the season: “I have not dug a grave, sir,” said the disconsolate sexton, “for these three week.” “And I assure you, John,” said the doctor, with an equally lugubrious face, “there has not been a ‘serious case’ in the parish for a month past.” Perhaps the sexton thought the doctor a little to blame for their being out of work, and that if he had done his part, the one might have had patients, and the other a grave or two to dig.

You will say, perhaps, at this jibe, — “A little learning is a dangerous thing.” If so, I shall feel inclined to retort

on you (but perhaps with more reason) by quoting the perverse commentary of a Methodist preacher on that celebrated line. “‘A little learning,’ says the poet, ‘is a dangerous thing.’ Ah! then, dear brethren, what must a great deal of it be?” Did ever ignorance plead its cause more ingeniously?

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXVI.

TO — — —, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, Monday, Aug. 4, 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am grieved to hear of your dyspepsia, and I have, as you wished, spoken to your old physician, Dr. S——. I heartily wish it were in his power to give you more specific advice than, at this distance, it is possible he should. To prescribe four hundred miles off (or, for that matter, four feet) without *seeing* the patient, is, in his opinion, the merest quackery. The only cases in which it could be justified are those, — and I apprehend they are not infrequent, — where the patient has nothing the matter with him. In such cases, if the doctor wished to minister “to a mind diseased” by amusing it, he might, if an allopathist, send a prescription for colored barley-water in grotesque medical Latin; or, if a homœopathist, an infinitesimal globule; though I am not quite sure that I could easily bring myself to practise this innocent sort of cheat on my patient, even to deceive him into health. . . .

But in any serious case (and any case, truly says Dr. S——, may become so by being treated injudiciously), this mode of cure, by doing nothing under a learned name, is

out of the question. Though, therefore, it may do for a conjurer, a clairvoyant, or a great "Indian *Medicine*," to prescribe for disease at a distance, it will not do for any genuine son of Esculapius. A physician really sagacious, and prophetic by long experience, may give ever so seemingly superficial a glance at a case, — and yet may rapidly combine the symptoms and deduce a just conclusion from them; but he must at all events see his patient. Therefore take your old friend's advice and, without delay, go to the nearest physician of repute.

Symptoms very similar to yours, says S——, *may* follow from almost any one of the many *species* of the many *genera* of dyspepsia, to which ingenious Nosologists vainly toil to reduce that Protean malady; a malady of which, notwithstanding all their minute classifications, nature still presents them with inexhaustible varieties. And as the different varieties may and do require corresponding delicacy of treatment, it is obviously impracticable for one at a distance to prescribe for you.

To a certain extent, however, both *he* and *I* are willing to prescribe for you; for it requires no great skill and no medicine at all. Comply to the utmost of your power with the general conditions of health, which are equally to be observed by everybody, and which, when diseases *can* be cured, will generally suffice to cure them — though a wise physician may do much to aid the process. Take all the indications nature itself gives you, and act upon them rigidly. Be regular in your hours — take plenty of air and exercise — do not rob yourself of the proper *quantum* of sleep (which I suspect you do) for business, or for any thing — however necessary you may deem it; for your first necessity is to get well. Above all, be careful to take that diet which you feel by experience best agrees with you. One word as to that deceptive appetite — that illu-

sive voracity, which you say sometimes plagues you. Dr. S—— says that you are not to listen to this lying oracle in the stomach, which often deceives a dyspeptic patient. — When the organ is empty, it assures him that it can and will deal with a full meal; and then when full, fails to fulfil its promises. This *miscalculation*, — either from a morbid appetite, which seems at present to be your case, or from a too voracious appetite, which is the case with the majority of mankind, — is a frequent cause, as well as symptom, of dyspepsia. We almost all eat more than can be fairly assimilated, and hence a chronic failure in the tone of the organ habitually overworked. There is certainly something very provoking in the not uncommon case of a disproportion between a factitious hunger which the empty stomach affects, and its power of performance; because the clamor it sets up is a false sign-post, and misleads. As to those, who, while the stomach says nothing, or even grumbles and resents, will overload the poor drudge, — they deserve all that they suffer. It is the old story of a perverted will — a moment's present gratification, and a future costly price of torment for it. The wheedling palate says, "another slice, or another cup" — and down it goes into the reluctant receptacle. Here pity is out of the question.

But there *is* something very pitiable when a poor mortal is the victim of a deceitful lure — a factitiously voracious appetite, — itself the result of disease, not of health. The true way of taming this wolf, as sometimes other wild beasts, is by letting it fast.

But whether the taking of food beyond what nature requires, be the effect of involuntary or voluntary depravity of appetite, your old Mentor and mine is of opinion that, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, it is the cause, remote or proximate, of all the infinite forms of that comprehensive disease, which lets our consciousness



into a secret which nature intended we should be ignorant of—namely, “that we *have* stomachs.” He affirms, and I rather think with truth, that nearly all the learned talk that is made about the *quality* of food, as wholesome or otherwise, difficult or easy of digestion, might be spared, if only people sinned not in *quantity*. He says, men in health might almost take anything that *can* be digested, provided they took it in no excess. This seems confirmed by the general experience of most who have plenty of vigorous exercise, pure air, and but little to eat. Nay, how soon does the pampered dweller in cities, who, perhaps, at home was complaining from morning to night of a queasy stomach, find this out in a rough tour through a country like this! What a solvent is the keen mountain air—what a power of dealing with anything that comes to hand (short of gravel and oyster-shells) does the stomach attain; and, if moderate in quantity, how little does it “keck” at the quality thereof!

Let me know how you are, soon. Dr. S., I should add, (for the opinion of a physician one confides in, is itself one of the very best prescriptions,) predicts that your symptoms will soon pass away.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXVII.

R—— S——.

ARRAN, Aug. 12, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,

If I do not comply with your request so fully as you may wish—for I have time only for a few brief hints—it is, as you will be sure, from no lack of interest in your pupil. As the son of an old friend, his welfare will never be indiffer-

ent to me. But to the point. He says, "It seems it can never be wrong to follow conscience, let it lead to what it will — and to do it must always be pleasant; that, therefore, even a conscientious Atheist must be blameless, and may be happy and safe." But suppose there *is* no conscientious Atheist! What then? At that supposition he would, no doubt, be indignant. Well, then, let us waive it.

J. T—— is like many other youths of his age, enamored of a half-truth, and, none the less that, seen in that state, it looks like paradox, and moreover seems to promise, what youth so dearly loves, a "Principle" which admits of no modification, no exception. His statement contains a truth indeed, but he must not suppose that there is anything very novel in his discovery.

It is an undoubted truth, discovered long before J. T—— was born, and clearly enough laid down by a host of moralists and casuists, — by Barrow, Jeremy Taylor, Stillingfleet, Chillingworth, — that "a conscience, however erroneous, *obliges*." But though it is true that a man must follow his conscience *when made*, the question returns, whether he may not have had a trifle to do with *making it*. It does not follow that because a man must obey his conscience, he is blameless in so doing. To make him so, we must assume that up to the time he is called on to act in obedience to its authority, he has had nothing to blame in the process by which he has come to have such a conscience; no prejudice, no indolence, no remissness in investigation, no disingenuousness, no momentary listening to vanity, waywardness, interest, or any other of the ten thousand warping influences which bias our judgments. Only in the case in which a man has impartially dealt with evidence, up to the full measure of his opportunities and abilities, is he *blameless*; and he is blamable, much or little, as he

has, much or little, deviated from this standard. So far from its being true, therefore, that to follow conscience (no matter whither) is certainly a "safe and pleasant duty," it may be, and often is, the very curse of a man's past unfaithfulness. In a thousand ways may man contribute to the state of mind in which he at last believes a lie to be the truth; and in proportion as he has done so, the necessity under which he brings himself to follow the "blind guide" is certainly no matter of congratulation, unless it be any such, "that both shall fall into the ditch."

It is true, indeed, that however pitiable his condition, it is still blameless, (I fear it is an apology which will rarely avail,) *if* it was absolutely impossible for the man, be it from the structure of his mind or his inevitable lot in life, to prevent the result or modify it for the better!

We cannot doubt, I think, that many a Thug — many a Mahometan fanatic — many a Romish Inquisitor — many millions of Idolaters — have conscientiously performed acts which *we* call the most detestable crimes. Well, the erroneous conscience, while they are in *that* state, coerces them, as much as a more enlightened conscience binds an apostle. Does it, therefore, leave them as blameless? Are we not only to pardon a Dominick, but to regard him with complacency — as we must if your pupil's principle be true? Is it not absurd to say so? We cannot even *pardon* him (as I have shown) unless the state of mind into which he has been brought is wholly and absolutely involuntary. If it be, pardon him we must; but even then we shall, at most, pardon — and pity; or shall we, like our young philosopher, say that a Bonner deserves admiration as much as a Hooper, — for both are *conscientious*?

If J. T—— shrinks from this, and says "no," for it cannot be that any man *can* conscientiously mistake acts, in themselves inhuman and cruel, for duty, (though I fancy he has too

much sense, in the face of history, to affirm that,) we should, of course, say that this is begging the question. If he should say, (what, perhaps, he would say) that his apology for "an erroneous conscience" is not designed to apply to the "practical," but to the "speculative" only,—to "opinions" not to "actions," then the next thing must be,—and a difficult task he will find it,—1st, to state the limits within which the apology for an "erroneous conscience" does *not* apply, by making the requisite distinction between "speculative opinions" and their consequences, involved as these are, especially in all matters of a moral and religious nature, with one another. This complication all superstition too plainly proves,—for as is the belief, so, as a general rule, is the practice; 2ndly, to prove that man is not responsible for his *head* as well as for his *heart*; for his speculative opinions as well as for his practical principles; that while an "erroneous conscience" does not excuse him for the state of mind in which he conscientiously believes that it is his duty to roast heretics, it does excuse him for conscientiously holding the Pope to be infallible, amidst so many proofs to the contrary; or that there is no God in the universe, amidst so many proofs that there is one! And yet who does not see, in these very instances, the impossibility of separating between speculative opinions and their practical results; for he who holds the former of these tenets will naturally obey it, and, like many a Dominick of the Roman Church, end by roasting heretics, if the Pope bids him; while he who holds the latter will not, I think, have much difficulty in coaxing his conscience to any "practical principles" he pleases.

In accordance with the spurious charity which characterizes our day, J. T—— is, I perceive, most indignant with those who think unfavorably of anybody for conscientiously acting upon his opinions, be they what they may. The

very argument is self-confuting, and the bulk of mankind are absolved from attending to it. For if men *conscientiously* think, as most men do (and are likely to do, I imagine,) that men are deeply censurable for the conditions of mind in which they take egregious falsehoods for truth, and practise abominable crimes as duty, they are excused for conscientious condemnation of such conscientious people, by the very terms of J. T——'s own arguments! We, surely, are not to be blamed for *following conscience* any more than such mad apologists for its eccentricities!

Such are a few hints which, if I were near you, I should give him.

Yours truly,

B. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXVIII.

TO — —.

LONDON, Dec. 11, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,

I cannot offer a single word of apology to your "secular" guest for what I said. You know he distinctly affirmed, in consistency with some of the "Secularist" authorities of our time, that he believed it was desirable to get rid of the conception of a presiding Deity under any possible modifications!—and that the absence of any such notion was more favorable to human virtue and morality than its presence. This opinion is asserted, as in some other Atheistical works (all obscure enough, to be sure,) so in a little one which proposes it as the "Task of To-day," to annihilate the—Deity! No doubt it will be the task of tomorrow also, and, I should think, the day after that.

You will recollect that when your "secularist" acquaintance affirmed the above strange dogmas, I gave him a fair

opportunity of retracting, by saying that if he merely meant that *such* a God as millions had worshipped, — a Belial, a Moloch, — an obscene and cruel Deity, — even a Venus or a Bacchus, — might possibly be as bad as none, (or worse,) many might agree with him; but if he meant *such* a Deity as implied Perfection of Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Goodness, none but a liar or a madman would. He positively reaffirmed, however, his opinion that, under *any* modification, the idea of a God was pernicious; that Atheism was better than Theism; and particularly appealed to those great "authorities," M. Comte, Mr. — and Miss —. It was then I said, if you recollect, (what I still say, and am prepared to maintain,) that I hold myself absolved from arguing with any one who can affirm that the idea of a perfectly holy, invisible, ever-present, infallible Governor (sincerely entertained), is *more* unfavorable to virtue than the notion that there is no God at all; or that, so far as it has any conceivable bearing on human conduct, it can be other than auxiliary to every imaginable motive to morality; that I was convinced, so long as the human intellect was constituted as it is, that the man who asserted such a paradox must be regarded by ninety-nine men out of every hundred as a liar, and that the hundredth would only shield him from *that* by supposing him *mad*.

I still hold to every syllable of that declaration. It is impossible, constituted as we are, that we can believe any man other than a hypocrite or an idiot, who tells us that, if you *add* a motive or two motives *coincident* with ten others, to these last, the whole will be diminished in force: that the supposition of an unseen judge over the *thoughts* as well as *actions*, and who will infallibly reward or punish them, in accordance with what even your "secularist" acquaintance himself *believes* to be true principles of human conduct, will be an impediment to right-doing! Would

it not be just as easy to believe that two and two make five? . . .

I am quite ready to argue with any candid Atheist, if such there be, (of which I have my doubts,) as to whether there is a God or not ; I am sure he will not descend to this sort of knavish or idiotic paradox. If sincere, he will say, "Well, if there be *no* such God as you have described, so much the worse for the world. I admit *that* ; one must confess that it is *desirable* there should be such an one ; but that does not prove that there *is* one." That is what I should call intelligent and candid ; and the argument might go on.

As to what he says of my want of charity — but let the man say what he pleases. If he be a liar, who would, and if an idiot, who could, reason with him ? and that he is either one or the other, is beyond doubt with me. . . .

Yours very truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXIX.

TO A HOMŒOPATHIC FRIEND.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for your kind inquiries after my health. I am happy to say that I am much better, without going to consult the homœopathic doctor whom you so ardently recommend. But I have, — pray do not be offended — done what is almost the very same thing ; that is, *nothing*. Dr. E——, though not a homœopathist, is, I believe, as well acquainted with his profession as any man in it. Finding the symptoms very obscure, he declined, like a wise man, poking about in the dark, and possibly doing me more harm than good ; and advised me, after giving me a few simple

directions as to diet and regimen, to put myself under all the natural conditions of health among the mountains. I did so — and *voilà!* I have returned, I do believe, as well as if I had taken — if I could be ever sure I had taken — sundry trecillionths of a grain of that infallible specific you were so kind as to prescribe for me.

Your zeal on behalf of homœopathy amuses me; but you quite mistake matters, when you tax me with forgetting the Baconian philosophy. You say it does not become me to reject well-ascertained facts, “because they are mysterious and inexplicable.”

I have no objection in the world to *facts*, be they ever so mysterious and inexplicable. But I must be sure that they *are* facts on a just induction. I assure you that if I found, from a report of a “Joint Committee” of Allopathists and Homœopathists, (and it must be so constituted, else the two factions would have no effectual check on each other’s prepossessions,) that of a thousand patients laboring under a certain complaint, say scarlatina, 80 per cent. were cured under allopathy, 70 per cent. without any treatment at all (though I should not wonder if Dame Nature did just as well as any of the faculty), and 90 per cent. under homœopathy; and if the experiment, several times repeated, gave each time the same or approximate results, I should at once become a homœopathist, — all the mystery and incomprehensibility of its “facts” notwithstanding. So that you see I am, after all, a very consistent Baconian. But I cannot receive *quasi* “facts” as facts, without just evidence, and certainly cannot take their “mysterious” character as an antecedent presumption of probability. As to the *general principle* of homœopathy — “*Similia similibus curantur*” — I have nothing to say about it; I am an incompetent judge; as incompetent as yourself, who are an excellent lawyer, I believe, but, so far as I know, as little of a physician as I am.



I must leave the faculty, therefore, to wrangle about this principle. But as to the minute doses, for the physical efficacy of which you vouch so manfully, I have a few things to object. You say that it is as well ascertained a fact that the ten thousandth part of a grain of antimony will produce an appreciable effect, as that a scruple will; or as any fact in the range of inductive science. I doubt it; I can and must judge, principally, from my own consciousness, though not from that alone. I take your prescribed globule, and cannot find that it produces the slightest effect on me. I have taken,—I am willing to take any of your decillionths of grains, (only bargaining that I may be sure of the necessary dilution or trituration by performing the process for myself, but under your eye if you like,) from one to fifty. I have done so, and I do not find that the effects you assign follow from these minute elements. I have known many other people say the same. What am I to think of the matter?

You say that the experience of others is different: that they find the minute doses palpably “potential;” that the effects of even a decillionth of some substances have been appreciable. No such averments can annul the *negative* instances I have mentioned; for your inference, on the positive side, may easily be the fallacy of “Non causa pro causâ.” For example, the peristaltic action is often slightly increased by the mere imagination that medicine has been taken, when it has not; many other processes are similarly quickened by fancy; in many, again, all that is required, is, instead of taking medicine, to use a little patience; and nature will perform her wonted task without the globules, and will doubtless perform it none the less *because* of the globules.

I have known a person, troubled with sleeplessness, take his invaluable “minutissimum” of a soporific,—his narcotic atom,—and congratulate himself next morning that,

after only two hours or so of restlessness, he fell into a calm sleep, — all owing, of course, to the viaticum of a globule ! I, on the other hand, equally troubled with sleeplessness, perform the same feat perpetually — without any globule at all. Two or three hours of sleeplessness are not spent altogether in vain. The simple solution is that both parties are wearied out, and at last go to sleep.

Now I can account for the effects in many such cases, without supposing your globule has had anything to do with them ; but I cannot account for the *want* of effect in the negative instances ; that is, where your globules, to all consciousness, produce none.

You may reply, perhaps, that there are cases in which large doses fail of their effect. I grant it ; there are no doubt cases in which the effect is intercepted by special causes ; but we must go by general *induction*, and five grains of opium or two scruples of rhubarb will effectually convince nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand that they *have* taken something. The difference in the two cases is, that those who venture to say they are *conscious* of the effects of your decillionths are, so far as I can find, very rare exceptions ; while, of those who take the larger doses, the rare exceptions are those who are *not* affected ; that is, the general rule and the exceptions change places. Again, even when the larger doses fail of their general effect, they leave, I fancy, potent signs to consciousness that *something* has been taken ; whereas I can take one or ten of your decillionths of a grain every hour for four-and-twenty hours together without any conscious effects whatever ; and other folks have similar obstinate experience. Once more, then, what am I to think of the matter as a Baconian ?

You tell me, and truly, but to no purpose, that the most minute elements of nature are often of the most potent

character; that a drop of the Cobra's poison is fatal; that in certain localities we breathe subtle forms of death, which we cannot detect. But here is still the difference; we know these agents by their effects, which are the very things which I do not find in the exhibition of your infinitesimal doses. About the bite of a rattlesnake (or even of a mosquito, for the matter of that) there is no mistake; and if I could discern by any facts, whether of sense, consciousness, or reasoning, that the millionth part of a grain of belladonna had produced any appreciable effect on me, I should just as easily credit it. My difficulty is that I cannot find the effects.

You say that there are some substances so potent, that exceedingly minute doses — as of strychnine — have a sensible effect. I admit it; but still if you keep to the same scale of minute doses, — minute proportionably as the medicine is potent, — the same objections apply. A fraction of a grain of strychnine is doubtless equal to many grains of nux vomica; but if you give only a quadrillionth or trecillionth of a grain, I shall still have no objection to take it.

If you say there may be substances so potent that even such a dose may be appreciable, I should think the wisest way would be to have little to say to such dangerous poisons, since you cannot, I fear, control them.

Another doubt I feel as to your infinitesimal doses is this. How can you be sure that you have administered them — that they have got into the patient's stomach at all? If they have not got there, I admit that they will produce no more effect than — they usually do when they *have* got there. But I know not how to be sure that they have reached their destination. They may, like the globule which was arrested in the hollow tooth of Hahnemann's patient (his solitary fatal case!) be waylaid by a million

obstacles, each too much for the poor little atom. Like the elements of nature, which you truly say are too subtle for our inspection or control — the contagious air, for instance, whence we inhale poison without knowing it — these infinitesimals are too minute for your manipulation. You had better leave them alone.

Moreover, I cannot comprehend, on such a theory as yours, how it is that we can remain in health for a day, since we must be taking all day long through our lungs and in our food, (especially in these days of adulteration,) your minute doses of the most deleterious substances. If you say, according to the usual assumption, (and it is nothing more,) that they will only affect the man in disease, and not in health, then when he is *out* of health, positively ill, and under treatment, these potent, though inappreciable agents, must come into play, and, one would think, must confound your *therapeutics*. If you say that they all happily neutralize one another, I suppose your little globe will be but another element among them, and must, one would think, get neutralized too; certainly you know as little what becomes of *it* as of them. At all events, it is clear that if such a chance-medley of potent “infinitesimals” *can* thus happily neutralize one another, anything like a calculable administration of your solitary “infinitesimal” is out of the question. One need not be surprised that the homœopathist, the contents of whose chest his children got hold of, played with, and jumbled together, (all unknown to him,) went on practising with the same success as before! In short, I cannot away with your hypothesis — or rather, I *must* away with it.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXX.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I begin to suspect the logic of your legal maxim, "De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio;" so valorously do you content for your infinitesimal doses. I cannot get myself to go further into them, but they shall be very welcome to go into me instead.

You have far outdone the generality even of the homœopathsists themselves in the defence of Hahnemann's strange theory of "dynamisation," that is, that infinitesimal doses are not only potent, but potent in the ratio of their minuteness; really I am unable to say one serious word to you.

According to this, the "second, third, fourth, . . . nth orders of infinitesimals" (as mathematicians would say) are progressively powerful; in proportion, it seems, as an atom becomes nearer to nothing, it becomes so much more efficacious! Just as it vanishes, I presume, it must be—omnipotent!

Nothing can exceed your doctrine except Hegel's philosophical paradox—Nothing—Being. If your theory be true, I marvel at the usual language of homœopathsists, who speak of the higher dilutions in the order of feebleness, not of potency, and tell a patient not to venture in such and such a case on anything *stronger* than No. 30! They ought rather to enlarge than diminish their doses, when they wish to diminish the effect! Nay—surely a scruple of strychnine ought to produce less effect than a grain, and a grain than the trecillionth of it!

But there is one argument in your last letter I cannot let pass. You say that, at least, the public is indebted to

the theory of minute doses for a modification in the practice of allopathists; that it has abridged that wholesale exhibition of drugs which used to be the fashion, and which turned many a poor patient's stomach into a druggist's shop. I am really pleased to believe that the rivalry between the medical factions *has* been attended with some such effects. At the same time do not flatter yourself that the revolution is greater than it is.

Too much physic *used* to be given, that is certain; but do not suppose that all was physic that was taken. Rely on it, — as many a medical man's confession, if ingenuous, would show us, — that it was not left to the homœopathists to find out the art of doing nothing under the appearance of doing something, just to amuse a patient; "*Vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona;*" millions of bread pills, millions of innocent draughts of infusion of roses and a dram of syrup, quite as harmless as your globules, used to travel down the throats of patients, simply because they *would* have something, and because the doctor must be paid.

The only difference between the two classes of practitioners often is, that the one charges in the *direct* proportion of the innocent bulky nothing, and your friends charge in the inverse proportion of the innocent infinitesimal nothing. It was, I grant, a rather absurd practice; but, on the other hand, it was hard to know what to do, since many patients would not be cured unless they swallowed all this nothing; and, what is much more important to the doctor, would not pay unless they had, as they thought, "value received" in the shape of the material drugs, instead of reckoning their true debt to be his visits and his skill.

Strangest of all, the law allowed the general practitioner his claims only in the shape of so much medicine from his — shop! For aught I know, the law remains as it was; but

the sense of the people is beginning to see that a professional man is to be paid for his knowledge and his time, and not according to the "weight avoirdupois" of the goods he supplies from his warehouse. But, be assured, the essence of this branch of the art,—of doing nothing under imposing forms,—was understood long before homœopathy was born, and will be understood as long as the credulity of patients shall demand that something be done when the medical man thinks that nothing need be.

Nor can I admit your sarcastic remark, that "if the globules do no good, they at least cannot on *my* theory do harm; and that this is more than can be said of allopathic doses." I fear there are many cases, and I have seen some, where your globules have done much harm by preventing anything good being done;—where symptoms that required prompt treatment, were dawdled with till disease got strength, and it was too late to do anything. I must also express my conviction that your doctors have an incomparable knack at making hypochondriacs; and, as I must think, very naturally. How should it be otherwise? Your system teaches a patient to believe that his life is ever at the mercy of infinitesimal elements and infinitesimal changes. Can he be other than fidgety about matters which never trouble other people's sleep?

Certainly, as far as I have observed, there are no folks in the world who require the doctor or take physic so often as the homœopathic patient; hardly a day passes without the medicine-chest being opened; well for him that it contains nothing! Similarly, nobody is so sensitive about all sorts of innocent changes of air and diet. For my own part, it would be a torment to live on the terms of some of the votaries of your infinitesimal doses, whom I have known.

However, I freely admit that such people are to be met with often enough among the patients of allopathists; though I must think that your system is specially adapted to befool a nervous temperament and stimulate a morbid fancy.

I handsomely concede that there are classes of patients to whom your practice may be beneficial. 1st. I think it is of admirable use for those patients—and there are many—who have *nothing in the world the matter with them*; for, as they will take physic, but require none, it is better they should take nothing, though they think it something!—at the same time, it must be said that the bread pills and the infusion of roses might, on the other system, do the work of nothing just as well. 2dly. For those who suffer from anomalous conditions of the nervous system, amenable, in a measure, to the fancy, (as they often seem to arise from it,) but whose symptoms baffle all rational treatment. It is often very important that these patients be amused with the appearance of something being done, —though here again the more bulky vehicles of *nothing* may do as well, for aught I can see, as the infinitesimals. 3dly. For those who have, indeed, something the matter with them, but whose symptoms are so obscure that a wise doctor is afraid to do anything lest he do mischief; while yet (the general case) the patient insists that something shall be done. Now here the globulets (if I may venture on the double diminutive) are admirable, I admit; though, again, the more corpulent pill of bread may be just as efficacious.

I am afraid you will consider these large concessions of the utility of your doses rather an insult than a compliment; but if so, you will please to recollect that it is extended with much impartiality to the opposite practice. In good earnest, as long as men are so credulous in their



reliance on medicine, as to insist that when the doctor knows that nothing need be done or can be done, or knows not what *is* to be done, he yet shall do something. I see no help for it. If it be gravely argued that it is unworthy of a physician to administer a system of delusion, and that he had better leave his patient uncured than cheat him into health, it is a pleasant question of casuistry which the doctor may, if he will, discuss in a clinical lecture, and see what his patient says to it. If the system be one of deception, I fear, nevertheless, that the physician must, to some extent, practise it or—starve.

But,—pardon me for saying so,—excepting the above cases, that is, when disease and its indications do not summon to prompt and decisive treatment, I, for one, had rather not trust to the globules.

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXI.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is in vain that you reiterate that you have “seen the good effects” of your darling globules—that you have seen your children recover under their use. I have already told you I have no difficulty in believing any “facts,” merely on account of their “mystery;” and that if, on a fair induction, more patients were discovered to be cured by your system than by any other, I should believe in it, were it (if that be possible) ten times as mysterious. But a single case or two, or indeed any man’s private experience, is not worth a rush in the controversy either

way: and for this simple reason — that every system of medicine might be proved equally efficacious on the same ground, inasmuch as it is the *general* rule that the sick get well, whether you do anything or not. Now, if I found, as I often should, that of three cases of (say) measles, all recovered, though one was treated allopathically, and one homœopathically, and one not treated at all — (mind, I say not that it is of little consequence which system, or whether any, be adopted, for Nature may be wisely aided even when she is quite competent to the case) — what right should I have to assign the cure, in the one case, to the infallible globule? You will say, — “As much as the allopathist to assign *his* cure to the more bulky drugs.” I answer, just as much, — that is, none at all; for the third cure, it seems, is to be attributed to — nothing! In fact, such individual instances are of no value; nor anything less than the wide and patient inductions I mentioned in the outset.

A very common fallacy is that of “*Non causa pro causa*,” and especially in medicine, where a plurality of causes or *apparent* causes may perpetually mislead. To the generality of men, it is enough if a certain antecedent has preceded a certain consequent, to satisfy them that there is the relation of cause and effect.

Hence numberless fantastical remedies which different ages and nations have prescribed as useful in disease, merely because their employment has happened to be nearly coincident with the cure, though they have no more caused it than the cock’s crowing causes the sun to rise. This credulous association of a mere antecedent of the cure with the cause of it, (which is all but universal with patients,) is, it must be allowed, too much encouraged by doctors of all kinds. Nothing is more common, in reports of cases, than to find an improvement attributed

undoubtedly to the administration of such a medicine, when the difficulty really is to establish the connection. If a patient gets worse after the medicine, I never find *this* sequence insisted on; though, for anything that we know, it might be, just as reasonably. "Ah!" says a patient, "it was a good thing I called in the doctor; *he* cured me." If he is cured without any doctor at all, he thinks nothing of it! If a patient recovers, it is always the doctor that cures; if he dies, ought it not often to be the doctor that kills? But it is then always—Nature. When the patient recovers, the doctor gets rid of the disease in spite of Nature; when the patient dies, Nature gets rid of the patient in spite of the doctor! How do we know how often the statement ought to be reversed; how often Nature saved the patient in spite of the doctor, and how often the doctor killed the patient in spite of Nature?

You will say, perhaps, that I speak like one who is "sceptical" as to the use of medicine altogether; you will infer falsely then. I do indeed believe that attacks of ordinary disease would in the immense majority of cases, be cured, though every physician in the world were poisoned; and that the great agent of cure is the "*vis medicatrix*" with which God himself has fenced the human organism, and by which it stoutly resists every incursion of disease. But I believe there is a noble sphere for the physician too; though I frankly confess my fear, that from the extreme difficulty of a really comprehensive induction,—of establishing the true connection of "*antecedents*" and "*consequents*," and from the infinitely variable, evanescent phenomena the science has to deal with,—it will yet be many ages before it attains much certainty, and will always be, to a great extent, a science of *guessing*. Nevertheless, even now the wise physician

has plenty to do,—especially if he will not promise or attempt too much; if he will but be content to be the cautious "*naturæ minister*," and stand by with the hope of aiding those processes within us, so many of which transcend all his art, and which, if he be rash, he may much more easily hinder than help; if, in a word, he takes that view of his position to which "old experience does attain," and which, in the language of Dr. Forbes, will lead him to acquiesce "in a mild tentative or *expectant* mode of practice;"—certain to appear wise "in old age, whatever may have been the vigorous or heroic doings of youth."

Surely we must allow that even if the physician only alleviates pain, and abridges processes which might otherwise be tedious, he is well worth all his fees. Nor less if he takes charge of us in *health*, and, studying its general physiological conditions, endeavors to keep us well. In truth, paradox as it may seem, it is when we are in health that we ought chiefly to look to the physician, and to avail ourselves of his skill. We should hear what he says (usually wise enough) about how we are to keep out of his hands; about regimen, diet, hours, occupation, and so forth: and the next best thing is to consult him, not when we *are*, but when we are *going* to be ill; when we are "getting out of health," as the phrase is. Then he has a chance of doing much more for us than in actual disease, and can often ward sickness off, or break its force. We are told that the Chinese Emperor's plan is to pay his physician while he is in health, and stop his pay when sick: the plan is ingenious, but can hardly be safe; for if, as the Celestials allege, it will stimulate the doctor's diligence, it is equally probable that should his Emperorship be laboring under a chronic or incurable disease, which might keep the doctor starving for a twelvemonth, it

might stimulate his industry a little too much, and usher in the reign of a younger and a more healthy monarch! Nevertheless, it is quite true that while the physician keeps us in health he best deserves his fees, and if we knew our own interest, we should then most willingly pay them.

In sickness, as I surmise, his art becomes darker and its success more dubious; his study of physiology is calculated to do more for us than all his study of pathology.

I have, you see, kept to my word, and said little or nothing of your system, except in relation to that point in which you have, to speak honestly, rather *bored* me, — the infinitesimal globules.

As to the “universal principle” of *homœopathy*, I leave it to professional people to fight it out, though I must say, for one, that the assertion of some one “universal principle,” on which all diseases are to be cured, (like “*Similia similibus curantur*,”) has a mighty occult quackish sound, and looks much more worthy of Paracelsus than Bacon. Neither does it seem quite fair of Hahnemann to charge all other practitioners with uniformly proceeding on some one *opposite* principle, as “allopathy or antipathy;” for neither “homœopathy” nor “allopathy” was ever heard of till he chose to invent the terms, and taking one himself, gave the other to all the rest of the medical world; whereas, I suppose, there is hardly any practitioner that would deny there are some cases in which his “*similia similibus*” would apply well enough, though they would be loath to make it a “universal principle.”

By the way, I perceive with much satisfaction that these infinitesimal doses, which you are so anxious to vindicate, are no longer insisted on as *necessary* to the system, by your homœopathic friends, — many of whom are abandoning them in practice. Most, I observe, are in open revolt

against Hahnemann's principle of "dynamization," which affirms that drugs are potent in proportion to the attenuation of the dose; according to which a pinch of arsenic equally diffused in the Atlantic might prove fatal to all the fish in it! — The curative property of a medicine is, according to Hahnemann, developed in a far higher degree by an inconceivably small than by a palpable dose!

Will you be angry if I tell you of a curious instance of the power of fancy in relation to your globules? One of the "faithful" on a certain night had taken *two* globules instead of one; — perhaps three! Alas! what was to be done in a case so imminent? The unhappy man lived in a small town near Edinburgh, in whose benighted precincts no homœopathic practitioner was to be found, and in desperation deigned to consult an allopathic doctor, whom, in a tremor, he called up, to know whether he could do anything for him. The mystic tube was placed in the doctor's hands. The ignorant doctor looked at the globules in despair. At length he poured a dozen or two into his palm, and said, "My friend, I cannot save you, but I can die with you!" He swallowed them; and nothing coming of it, the patient took heart of grace, departed in peace, slept soundly, and was cured of his nervous fancies and his dread of the despotic globules at the same moment.

Forgive me in conclusion, if I just hint that the bold exhibition of your medicines, and the writing of "Defences" of homœopathy by utterly unprofessional folks, gives your system an undeniably empirical appearance to the world in general. It looks as if you thought medicine the only thing that may be understood without study or experience; that instead of being the most difficult, it is nearly the easiest of the sciences. Here are you, for example, a good lawyer certainly, but ignorant of the very elements of all those sciences which lie at the basis of the successful prac-

tice of Medicine,—of Anatomy, Physiology, Botany, Chemistry,—yet becoming quite a homœopathic knight-errant or evangelist;—prescribing at any distance, and sending your all-saving globules by post! I think, if I were a homœopathic doctor, I should say of all such amateurs — “Non tali auxilio.” . . . . .

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXII.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

LONDON, Oct. 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The recovery of your casket was very remarkable; and I am sure you ought to reverence hereafter the “Electric Telegraph,” for without that you might never have seen it again. Certainly it plays the part of Puck to admiration; and perhaps in time, to the shame of the nimble Ariel himself, will put a girdle round about the earth, not in five-and-twenty, but in less than *five* minutes. I remember prophesying to an engineering friend, when the wires were first laid down a few miles out of London, that in all probability some twenty years hence we should be able to transmit a message to Calcutta in seven minutes. He did not shake his head in grave doubt, but shook his sides in laughter of incredulity at the seeming extravagance of the thought; but when the first few miles of submarine telegraph were completed, he came over to my opinion, and declared his belief that the thing *might* be.

Even in *that* case, however, we shall probably be as much struck with the limitations imposed on man’s power, as with the extent of it; these will still be quite enough to

keep him humble, if anything could keep him so. You send home a message, for example, that troops are instantly to be sent to India; but as *they* cannot be sent by "Electric Telegraph," they will make their appearance some three months after date, and perhaps as many after the crisis is over in which alone they could be of service. You send word for the "Vulcan" or the "Gorgon," or some other of those great war-steamers with the amiable names, to come home immediately. The mandate reaches them in five minutes; they instantly obey, as far as the sluggish nature of steam permits (oh! ye powers! that ever "steam" should be so spoken of); and three months after, the lumbering old hulks (still by comparison I speak) make themselves visible at Spithead or the Nore. It is as though you sent a monkey to a sloth, bidding him look about him and be brisk! The *lightning* of the "Telegraph" flashes from hence to India, from one end of heaven to the other, in a moment, and the *report* follows a quarter of a year afterwards. But all is typical of human conditions still; it is the old contrast between promise and fulfilment — thought and execution — the tongue and the hand — swift imagination and slow-paced reality. The electric flash is quick, but the flash of thought is quicker still; and yet, with inert matter to deal with and vanquish, what years often elapse between a bright conception like that of Watt, and the tardy realization!

Certainly some of the minor achievements of the "Telegraph" are very amusing, — as in *your* case. To be sure, you would not call it so; it was, to you, a grand feat, considering the value of the recovered waif. Perhaps, too, the fond mother to whom the following happened, would think the like in her own case. She was travelling by express, and her little girl, feverish and thirsty, asked for a little water just as they were leaving a certain station. The



mother threw open the window, and called to the guard to order a glass. But the inexorable train was just starting. "No time, madam," said the guard; "but I will tell them to telegraph for one at the next station." No sooner said than done; and at the next station, with due ceremony, out came the glass of water ready for her, though at rather a high price. Yet *she* thought it cheap enough.

I remember, a few months ago, leaving by express that great trysting-place of railway trains — Normanton, where sometimes, for a few moments, there is a charming chaos of passengers and luggage to be despatched a thousand different ways. A lady, who did not know that she was to break her journey there, was suddenly summoned from her trance of satisfaction, and hastily quitting the carriage, left in the netting a nice silk umbrella. A few moments after she left, I noticed it, and remarked to a gentleman sitting by me, that we must remember, when we got out, to point it out to the guard, and describe the person who had left it. On getting to my destination, some thirty miles further on, I had no sooner deposited my portmanteau on the platform than I turned to look for some official that I might point out the stray property to him. I saw a guard standing at the door of the carriage I had just left, and told him: "All right, sir," said he, "I have got it. It has been telegraphed for from Normanton." But was it not too bad, to be thus balked in this attempt to do a little bit of kindness and honesty by that thief of a telegraph?

But I think the most curious fact, taken altogether, that I ever heard of the electric telegraph was told me by a cashier of the Bank of England. You may have heard of it. It may have been in print. I am sure it deserves to be. "Once upon a time," then, on a certain Saturday night, the folks at the Bank could not make the balance come right, by just 100%. This is a serious matter in that little estab-

lishment: I do not mean the cash, but the mistake in arithmetic; for it occasions a world of scrutiny. An error in balancing has been known, I am told, to keep a delegation of clerks from each office at work sometimes through the whole night. A hue and cry was of course made after this 100/, as if the old lady in Thread-needle Street would be in the Gazette for want of it. Luckily on the Sunday morning, a clerk (in the middle of the sermon, I dare say, if the truth were known) felt a suspicion of the truth dart through his mind quicker than any flash of the telegraph itself. He told the chief cashier on Monday morning, that perhaps the mistake *might* have occurred in packing some boxes of *specie* for the West Indies, which had been sent to Southampton for shipment. The suggestion was immediately acted upon. Here was a race — lightning against steam! and steam with eight-and-forty hours' start given. Instantly the wires asked, "Whether such a vessel had left the harbor?" "Just weighing anchor," was the answer. "Stop her!" frantically shouted the electric telegraph. It was done. "Have up on deck certain boxes marked so and so: weigh them carefully." They were weighed; and one — the delinquent — was found heavier by just one packet of a hundred sovereigns than it ought to be. "Let her go," said the mysterious telegraph. The West Indian folks were debited with just 100/. more, and the error was corrected without ever looking into the boxes or delaying the voyage by an hour. Now that is what may be called "doing business."

Yours,

B. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXIII.

TO A MESMERIC ENTHUSIAST.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your "furor mesmericus" amuses me. I quite agree with you that there is no possibility of arguing against facts; it is their amount and significance alone that I question in the present case. I have no manner of doubt in the world that you have witnessed, as you say, the artificial production of some curious phenomena. They seem to me to resemble in many respects those which somnambulism spontaneously presents, and probably depend on similar conditions. I doubt, however, — see my moderation, — the entire phenomena of "clairvoyance," as you call it; and also whether even those more limited phenomena, the occurrence of which I do *not* doubt, are referrible to any mysterious influence proceeding from those who profess to exercise the function of mesmerists; whether there be any "nervous emanation" issuing from them, or any incomprehensible dominion exerted over the will of their patients, or indeed any other influence whatever than is implied in activity of imagination and susceptibility of nerves in the latter. It seems to me that it is *within* and not *without*, that the true causes of the phenomena, so far as they are real, are to be sought; in the advantage which the condition of the patient gives the operator, not in any power which proceeds from him; not in the pokings and wavings, called "passes," of the operator's fingers. Of course the stronger the belief in his mystical power the greater will be the operator's chance of success; but all such predisposing causes are the patient's contributions to the result, not those of the mesmerist. In a word, I believe the fortress is surrendered, not taken by assault.



And this, I think, accounts in part for the capricious character of the phenomena; that one man is not at all affected, another slightly; this man soon, another slowly; — I think, I say, it accounts for the facts more easily than your mysterious talk of “passes,” “mesmeric currents,” “magnetic fluids,” and sympathetic “rapports.”

I have myself been under a somewhat celebrated operator's hands; and nothing came of it. I am so far, however, from being incredulous on that account, as to the facts of which you speak, that I can the more readily credit them; for though I do not admit that they are due to some mysterious influence on the operator's part, I am inclined to believe, from my own experience, that there is perhaps no one who might not be brought into a condition of catalepsy by subjection of the optic nerve, or possibly any other surface of sensation, to prolonged and monotonous stimulation.

Nay, though the mesmerist's operation, (by the influence which the fancy or nervous susceptibility of the patient may give to him,) may facilitate the result, I believe that it might generally be produced without any operation at all; — the effect being more or less rapidly induced, and more or less marked, according to the constitutional peculiarities of the individual. I quite believe that if a man, *even by himself*, were to fix his eyes intensely on a small bright disk without winking, he would after a time find himself (or rather be found) in a state of catalepsy. Some of the familiar experiments we have most of us made, or seen made, with birds, when we were schoolboys, — and the initial sensations which any man, alone, may induce in himself at will, by playing similar scientific pranks, confirm me in this suspicion. I have heard of a man involuntarily playing the mesmerist on himself, while intently watching delayed signals of the electric telegraph; the intense unbroken gaze at length terminated in a fit of catalepsy;

and I can easily credit it. Probably there is no man, however strong his nerves, who could endure an indefinitely prolonged *unwinking* gaze on a small defined disk without becoming unconscious; the trial with the human eye is still more difficult, as boys who attempt the feat of "staring each other out of countenance" soon find. Certainly, when I underwent my mesmerist's gaze, I felt how easily the condition might be superinduced in men of weak nerves; and that *habit* and power of *endurance* alone would settle the question as to which was the operator and which the patient. It might well happen, I fancy, that the operator, if he chanced to meet with a sturdy customer, might find himself *operated upon* instead of *operating*, — conjugating the "passive" instead of the "active" voice. At all events, I doubt whether any man's eye could bear, without being refreshed and brushed each moment (as nature intends it should) by nictation, to gaze for an unlimited time on a small bright disk; and I do *not* doubt, that if compelled to do so, the phenomena of your mesmeric catalepsy — or something resembling it — would supervene. And it is very possible that the same might happen if the auditory nerve, or some limited portion of the tactual surface were similarly subjected to an unvarying stimulus. Variety of sensation and variety of thought are essential to us; and mind and body bear testimony to the same peculiarity of our constitution. The same thought would soon drive us mad; and continued intense iteration of the same sound, if it did not force poor mind to take refuge in sleep, would, I fancy, force it to take refuge in catalepsy.

You see, therefore, that so far from denying those "*facts*" of mesmerists about which you make so much noise, I believe them to be more universal than you do; I also admit them to be very curious and worthy of investigation, though not more so than those of somnambulism; only I do

not believe that they flow from some mysterious "influence" of your scientific hierophants, whom I place, *pace tua*, on the same footing with fortune-tellers or conjurers.

Whether it be wise to superinduce any abnormal state like that of artificial catalepsy, — whether it is always safe to do so, — I have my doubts; or at least we should not for the sake of mere curiosity.

Such are my views of ordinary "mesmeric" phenomena; but as to what you call "clairvoyance," whereby men, it seems, may see with the back of their heads, and read out of their toes, I regard it as unsophisticated nonsense.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am not a little amused by your putting me on the defensive. When you ask me how, as a disciple of the Inductive Philosophy, I can call the alleged facts of "clairvoyance" in question, I answer at once that it is precisely because I *am* such. You say that the incomprehensibility of the facts is no reason for their rejection; it is quite true, but nothing to the purpose. What I want is the *facts*; undoubted, well-authenticated facts. That people can read (or rather divine what is in a book) with their eyes shut; tell what is doing at a given moment, by people they have never seen, in a house a hundred miles off; send a person, at an equal distance, to sleep, by means of a pair of mesmerized gloves, — surely I may be excused for asking stringent proof of such things. You say that there is adequate, unimpeachable testimony to such facts, however strange they

may be. I answer, that when I sift the testimony, I do not find it adequate. I find so much that requires to be at once rejected, that it necessarily casts suspicion on that scanty remainder of *quasi* facts I cannot account for ; and it is more rational to conclude that they are not to be relied upon than that they are. 1st. I see that many of the alleged facts I have heard, and some I have had an opportunity of investigating, have turned out to be absolute trickery ; neither better nor worse than a common conjurer's tricks ; exactly on a par with the feats of the renowned Sidrophel of "Hudibras," or Cadwallader of "Peregrine Pickle ;" and who shall say how many more of your feats of mysterious intelligence are similarly the effect of concert and collusion ? 2dly. Other wonderful stories of the kind, when unswathed from the voluminous folds of exaggeration in which successive reporters have wrapped them, (nay, the imagination of even two or three will often suffice,) have shrunk into such minikin proportions that we can hardly see anything wonderful at all. What B has unconsciously given to the narrative of A, and C to that of B, and D to that of C, has made something portentous in the accuracy of a clairvoyant's responses ; when the real facts, at last got at, show only some vague relation between question and answer, or, it may be, something like a curious coincidence. The glowing imagination of an enthusiast can unconsciously shape these ductile and fluent elements into what it will ; I say, unconsciously — for it may all be done without lying. 3dly. Though most desirous of seeing some of those wonderful things you say you have undoubtedly witnessed, they have somehow always escaped me. I have unluckily seen no phenomena which need, for their solution, any such hypothesis as yours. You say "seeing is believing," and that you *have* seen ; I answer, perhaps so ; but I have *not* seen ; and in

such a case, and in such ragged condition of the testimony, "not seeing" is (or ought to be) "not believing." 4thly. I find that another large deduction from the reported facts is to be made on another score, — the credulity of spectators. I find that if clairvoyant conjurers find any difficulty in bamboozling their audience, their audience often take the trouble off their hands by bamboozling themselves; they like to be duped, and duped they are. A little while ago, a shrewd friend of mine (a medical man,) at an evening exhibition of the "phenomena," got near a clairvoyante who was conveniently *en rapport* with the chief exhibitor. She, my friend was told, would and could say nothing except through the exhibitor as the *medium*. My friend, however, kept near, and while Mr. Exhibitor was befooling his gaping audience, threw her off her guard, and got the dumb lady to speak. The meeting broke up in most admired disorder; but what thanks did my friend get for unmasking the cheat? Just this — "Confound that Mr.——; what right had he to put in *his* oar? He has completely spoiled the evening!" Are not such things almost enough to make one say — "*Populus vult decipi et decipietur?*" 5thly. Your experiments are all of the "tentative" character; not only do they generally issue in nothing that needs investigation, but they oftener issue in nothing, than not. Pardon me for saying that your enthusiasm wholly runs away with you when you so rashly affirm, that if you reject the phenomena of clairvoyance, you must reject the miracles of the New Testament! It is impossible to imagine anything more ludicrously unlike than the two things. Not only is the testimony for the Scripture miracles utterly dissimilar from that for your pretended wonders, in the several respects I have already mentioned, but in this last it is diametrically opposite. If I found that Christ and His apostles professed, like the Catholics at the tomb of the



Abbé de Paris, to perform miracles only of a "tentative" character ; — if they sometimes tried to heal the sick, and more frequently failed than not ; to cure epilepsy or bad eyes, and only now and then succeeded, I should know what to think of the matter ; I should think it more probable that the precarious success in a few cases was owing to favorable circumstances in the patients — to the conditions of the nervous system, and the character of the disease — than to any supernatural power. I should think the symptoms yielded to the influence of faith and imagination in the patient, (as in many diseases they often will,) not to the power of the thaumaturge. And even so, when I find that in the greater number of your exhibitions none of the wonderful things promised are done, I naturally attribute a few seeming prodigies to lucky guesses, curious coincidences, accident or fraud, rather than to any mysterious powers in your uncertain wonder-workers. 6thly. I am compelled to argue thus when I find that none of your clairvoyants can or will solve any of the simple riddles proposed to them ; for not a soul of you would even hazard a guess at the *number* of that bank note in the Dublin Bank, which was promised to the happy guesser ; — as I also hereby promise to make you or any of your friends a present of the bank note at which I am now looking, if you will but tell me either the bank, the number, or the date ! In such cases there is at least a *chance* of success, and yet none of you will seize it. How confounding, again, are the failures in the case of Sir John Franklin ! He ought to have been home long ago, if clairvoyants had not been as blind as buzzards ; for they have again and again hazarded the promise.

A few years ago some English engineers were employed in raising a sunken vessel at the mouth of the Seine, (it had been there many years,) which was confidently reported to be the very vessel in which, at the first Revolution,

much of the royal plate and treasure had been wrecked. When the operation commenced, so heated were the fancies of some who were interested in its successful accomplishment, that they could not help being tickled with the favorable visions of a celebrated *clairvoyant*, who plainly saw vases, goblets, salvers of gold and silver, *ingots*, — goodness knows what! Half unbelieving, his hearers were yet half cajoled by their own hopes. Alas! it turned out to be only a cargo of tallow.

Though your twitting me with a departure from the caution of the “inductive philosophy,” has provoked me to carry the war into the enemies’ quarters, and to show that *you* are the party really chargeable with the fault, I shall not scruple to say that these fantastical “*facts*” are among the few things that I should think it quite competent to reject on *à priori* grounds alone. There are two, which I think quite enough to settle the question; but as this letter is already unconscionably long, I shall reserve them for another. . . . .

Yours,

B. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXV.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The two things which I deem sufficient to expose your *clairvoyant* pretensions, are these, — 1. You require me to believe that the laws which so palpably limit and control both the mode and extent of human knowledge are capriciously repealed, every time your Experimenters think proper to demand it, for the most trumpery gratifications of their trumpery curiosity; when, for example, they think proper to see blindfold, or to tell us what is taking place in

the beck drawing-room of No. 8, Russell Square, — the clairvoyant never having been there, and being, at this present, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, or Dublin! If any one thing is obvious as a *general law*, (and plainly necessary it is for the government of the world,) it is this, — that we are not allowed to look through “stone walls” nor into other people’s breasts; that the heart of our neighbor is to him an inviolable sanctuary, except so far as the language of his tongue or of his actions discloses his thoughts, and that only the eye of Omniscience can pry there. This I say is plainly the law under which we live, and indeed without it, society would be intolerable. Yet you suppose that Omniscience entrusts the key of this lock to every *quid nunc* of a clairvoyant; and, as far as we can judge from the trifling purposes for which the experiments are usually made, and the equally trifling results in which they usually end, for the mere gratification of an idle curiosity! Nay, you must believe, in effect, that God delegates, for a moment, nothing less than the use of His omniscience to Mr. A. or Mr. B., who is requested to be pleased to tell instant what Mr. Smith is doing at the present moment at any house in London; what has become of Sir John Franklin at the North Pole; or what is taking place in the centre of the earth, or the bottom of the ocean; and all, so far as I can discern, — all — (*proh pudor!*) that a set of gaping youths and gossiping dowagers may have an idle hour enlivened and a foolish wonder gratified, as they dawdle over a cup of tea in Professor Slowman’s drawing-room! So strongly do I believe that the laws which God has established secure the lock of every man’s thoughts from clairvoyant impertinence, that if (which I never had a chance of) I saw any of the wonderful facts to the contrary which you retail, I should certainly believe that God, at least, had nothing to do with them. If after

having provided himself, for example, with such questions as I alone could answer, and yet of the same trumpery character as those which your friends, on the 18th ult., put to their oracle, I found really accurate responses, I acknowledge that I should at once agree with you that there was *something* in it — and a *devilish* deal too ; but, so strong is my *à priori* view of the extreme improbability of God's systematically infringing His general laws at the beck of your *clairvoyants*, and for their nonsensical purposes, that I should deem it far more probable that, in the particular case, (perhaps to punish silly folks for their credulity, curiosity, and presumption,) he had for once permitted a mischievous imp to play the oracle ; I should be inclined to say — “ Monsieur Clairvoyant, or Madame Clairvoyante, (as the case may be,) I am now perfectly convinced that there is something in you ; but being also convinced, as strongly as I can be of anything, that the laws of God are diametrically opposed to this habit of prying into our neighbor's bosom, I am inclined to surmise that your power has rather a suspicious origin, and the less I see of you the better ; I beg to decline any further familiarity with your familiar.” However, I shall know how to deal with these phenomena, which somehow never come in my way, when I meet with them.

2. My second reason, wholly unconnected with any experiments, is, that I do not find that man makes any application of these wonderful powers ; which I think he *could* do, if there were anything in them. There is one thing which can infallibly be depended on, if nothing else can ; and that is, that men are surprisingly 'cute, as Sam Slick says, in discovering their own interest — “ that's a fact.” When the steam engine — the railway — the illuminating power of gas — the electric telegraph, are placed at man's disposal, they are not permitted to remain idle toys ; they

are instantly welcomed, and applied to the most comprehensive uses. And yet what are any of these or all of them together, compared with the power, both for good and evil, of the faculty of clairvoyance, if there were any such thing? Would either man's cupidity or benevolence be blind to such a marvellous agent? What a means of detecting criminals, — of tracing "lost, stolen, and strayed!" What a reinforcement of Bow Street! What a happy supplement would it afford to evidence when a prisoner does not make confession — or, for the matter of that, how easy to take a peep into his bosom and make the confession for him! What a help to the doctor, — and surely no less to the patient, whose entrails might thus be subjected, not to a lamentable *post mortem*, but a salutary *ante mortem* examination! What an instrument for diplomatists — what an invaluable picklock to open hostile cabinets! What a pleasant, painless rack for worming out political secrets! What an instrument, above all, in war! How cheaply the newspapers might keep "our own correspondent" in every quarter of the world — who yet need never go beyond the sound of Bow Bells! How priceless, in all these cases, would be a genuine clairvoyant!

You will say, perhaps, that there *are* those who consult this oracle. Well, I believe some credulous persons do so now and then, just as some go to the vulgar fortune-teller: but if *it were found to answer, everybody would*. No such discovery will human interest and human cupidity, or even human philanthropy, allow to remain unfruitful. You will say, perhaps, that it would be a *dreadful* thing if clairvoyance *were* thus resorted to; that men would be secretly circumventing one another, to the utter ruin of the world! That is a very good reason, *à priori*, against the existence of such a power, and an excellent reason, if it *did* exist, why men should not employ it; but no reason — alas! why they

would not ; for when was there any lack of men ready to use any instrument, good or evil, that answered their purpose ? And in this case, if any did use it and found it effectual, all *must*, if only in self-defence ; just as, if bad men draw swords, good men must draw them too.

Till I see the sharp wit of man thus turning your clairvoyance (as everything else that can be so turned) to practical purposes, I shall continue to rank it with so many kindred delusions, which in every age, for a few months or years, amuse those whose fancy is stronger than their reason, and then pass away for ever.

I am yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXVI.

TO REV. C. ELLIS.

Dec. 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Has it never struck you that many of the events of life occur in such a serio-comic manner (as one may say), involving so much transient vexation, yet so barren, as far as we can see, of any results, that if we did not believe *all* things under the control of a superintending wisdom, one might refer them to that sort of playful, sportive malice which schoolboys certainly have, and fairies were formerly supposed to have ; malice, which enjoyed the exquisite momentary distress, the comic perplexity of mortals, yet without any serious intention of doing any great mischief ? I do not wonder that our forefathers should have resorted to Puck, Robin Goodfellow, and their company, to account for these *contre-temps*.

I have just had a specimen of this sort of practical joke.

On a recent journey I had had a small box of important documents intrusted to me by a friend; I willingly took charge of it, and as it was to be under my own eye, I scrawled on it in joke, "John Smith, passenger." On entering the Babel-like station of one of the great centres of railway traffic, the box intrusted to me was set down for a moment with my portmanteau; and while I was settling with the cabman, an officious porter, concluding that it was going by a train just loading, carried it away, and by the time I turned to take it, he and the treasure had vanished. My train, by which I was to go, was within five minutes of starting, and in a state of the greatest possible excitement I raced up and down the chaos of stairs and platforms in search of the box. Almost at the last moment, I found it in a distant corner just opposite a train going in a totally different direction: in five minutes it would have been whirled off, and in three hours snatched half the length of the kingdom from its negligent custodier. I probably should have recovered it, but, possibly also, I should not. Even the telegraph would not have helped me except I had telegraphed to every point of the compass; and then only think of telegraphing for something belonging to "John Smith, passenger." Ten to one there were a thousand packages so marked! Unhappy name!

As it was, — nothing came of the matter that I could find, then or since, except five minutes of exquisite panic and vexation, — much such as a mischievous monkey may be supposed to delight in inflicting. Certainly, if I had believed in Puck I should have thought he had assumed the guise of that "railway porter."

Yet we never know whether there may not be more than seems in such apparently trivial things, — and my faith, though not my reason, assures me there is. One comprehensive solution of many such things a devout man will

thankfully find in his ignorance of what *might* have occurred had it not been for such diversion. It is obvious that five minutes, nay, one, — nay, a second, may suffice for events of the last importance to us; to remain on this spot rather than to move ten paces off, may be the difference between death and life; a change of purpose for a quarter of an hour may lead us out of a great danger or into one; being prevented from going by this ship instead of that, may protect us from shipwreck, or expose us to it; a few minutes' conversation in the street with a bore we tremble to see coming may delay us till some unknown peril, which may be crossing our path, and which we should else have encountered, has passed and left the way clear: in fact, the most insignificant change or obstruction or acceleration of our purposes may be connected, and cannot but be, with the most important events of life to us all; and thus they may subserve the most momentous purposes, though we are ignorant of them. The region of the " *Mediæ Scientiæ*," as the scholastic divines used to call it — the region of the "possible" — of the things that *would* happen *if* something else did not, — may suggest the key to what often seem to us the most sportive pranks of a purposeless destiny. And on reflecting, we may perhaps see there is also another solution: for may they not be designed to quicken gratitude? Where transiently vexatious events have occurred without serious results, ought we not thankfully to remember how easily they *might* have terminated otherwise? Shall we perversely desire a catastrophe because our *fears* are disappointed?

I remember, when a boy of ten years of age or so, lying, on a tempestuous autumn day, at the foot of a huge elm at the head of a noble avenue of like giant trees, and listening with solemn delight to the roar of the wind in the branches; all at once I heard a sound which sharply rose above the din of the storm; — a crash — a sweep — and I felt that



something was the matter in the upper regions of the tree. I rolled and scrambled away as fast as I could a few paces, and a moment after, down came a heavy branch on the very spot where I had been lying, and which, had I not got out of its way, would have crushed me. Could I look, boy as I was, on the escape, without a gush of gratitude? And such in every like case, spite of all the metaphysics of fatalism, is the unsophisticated feeling of humanity.

Yet some "contre-temps" are so exquisitely droll that one would almost suppose their chief object was to furnish us, in the retrospect, with a more than compensating amusement for our vexation. "Hæc olim meminisse juvabit" — would seem to apply to not a few of our minor distresses. Did I ever tell you of a circumstance which our old friend J. M. used to relate of some friends of his? Two young ladies in Devonshire one day wished to visit some relatives a dozen miles off. Their brother, — a *harum-scarum* sort of a fellow, and who rode a horse as *harum-scarum* as himself, which he had very properly christened "Mad Tom," — offered to drive them. Albeit Mad Tom was very restive in harness, he assured them he could manage the brute. They consented; but such were the creature's flings, and kicks, and shying, and deviations to the right and left, that he kept the sisters in a perpetual panic. However, they at last reached their destination in safety; but nothing could induce them to repeat the experiment, and even young *harum-scarum* did not seem to relish it. Accordingly, he agreed to return on horseback, while his sisters borrowed their host's little pony-chaise and his old gray pony, which never forgot a becoming gravity either of pace or demeanor. They set out, on a lovely summer evening, on the journey homeward. My young master stayed for half an hour or so, to take a parting cup with his host, and then clattered off after his sisters. They, good souls! were qui-

etly jogging, with the old gray pony, along a narrow lane, fenced by a high hedge on each side, thinking no harm in the world, and congratulating themselves that they had so happily escaped Mad Tom. All at once they heard a terrible tramp and shouting behind them, and, turning their heads, saw, horror of horrors! the ungovernable brute coming at a pace which would soon bring him upon them. He had evidently got the upper hand, and their brother's shouts were to warn them to get out of the way. They edged and edged towards the ditch — Mad Tom came up, just grazed the wheel, but evidently out of *malice prepense* allowed them as little room as possible — pushed, as he passed, against the honest gray, and in a moment the pony and chaise and the fair sisters were tumbled into the ditch, while Mad Tom, and his equally mad rider, swept away like the whirlwind.

The young ladies were, happily, uninjured; but they often used to laugh, in after days, at their momentary terror when they saw the demon of a horse apparently bent on their destruction!

An old friend once told me that, having taken a long journey on horseback, he was musing, during the last stage, with grateful memory, on the immunity from *danger* he had enjoyed: that his horse had not fallen with him, nor he fallen from his horse, and so on; when, unhappily, just in the midst of his devout ejaculations, Dobbin stumbled, threw him on his face, and almost broke his nose! Was the good man, by his ill-timed meditation, abstracted too much from the outward practical duty of attending to his horse, and was he thus to be taught that for "everything there is a reason?" or was he too much uplifted with the complacent thought of the *special* protection and favor he had enjoyed? — for such is our folly, that even pious gratitude is apt to express itself in forms which look much more like absurd vanity.

Apart from some such views, *this* "contre-temps" look as like a little piece of sportive malice, as one can well imagine.

Well, in spite of all *contre-temps*, I hope to spend Christmas with you; — that is, *if* nothing happens to prevent it, as it is certain ten millions of things may; *if* I am alive and well; if you are alive and well; if no *other* friend has met with any misfortune which shall keep me away; if when I have started, the railway train does not meet with a mishap; if that awful omnibus for the last five miles does not break down, — no unlikely matter by the way; and if I should survive that last dreary, doleful part of the journey! As to your giving me a welcome — *that* is a contingency I do not think it worth while to speculate about; so much more surely, after all, can we calculate on *moral* than on the combinations of *physical* causes; so much more permanent, amidst all man's proverbial fluctuations, are the relations which human character establishes, than those of the ever shifting scene of events in which we play our part; events the nearest of which we cannot foresee, and the minutest of which we cannot control, amidst all the boasted "*prevision*" of science!

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 11, 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

By way of postscript to my last, I must mention two or three other droll incidents of the class referred to in my last letter, which have since occurred to remembrance. They will, if I mistake not, illustrate the subject rather strikingly.

A friend of mine, who lived a few miles from London, was going thither in his pony-chaise one rainy morning, and could not find his umbrella. He borrowed a silk one of his sister-in-law, and lost that on the way. "Well," he thought, "poor girl, she shall have a good one to make up for it." He bought for her one of the very best he could find, and lost that going back!

Another friend, in the old coaching days, was going, one cold winter's night, by mail from London, and debated in his mind whether he should save the difference of the inside fare at the expense of his benumbed toes and fingers. He thriftily reasoned that he wanted a new silk umbrella, which the proposed economic dodge would just pay for. But alas! having fallen into a miserable nap in the morning watch, he found, when he woke, that his umbrella had slipped out of his hand; and thus he had the satisfaction of travelling *outside* at *inside* price! A third friend, staying for a night in Manchester, debated whether he should take a cab and go to see some friend who lived in the suburbs; "But," thought he, "it is uncertain if I shall find him at home, and if not, it will be five shillings thrown away." So he thought he would just take a short walk in the town instead. Before he had been out of the hotel five minutes, he found himself *minus* a new silk handkerchief, for which he had just given the very sum that would have paid for the cab! To such things as these even the "*Hæc olim meminisse juvabit*" will hardly apply.

But the most provoking and serious of all such tragicomedies I ever heard of occurred a short time ago. You may have seen some account of it in the newspapers. A gentleman at Liverpool, about to remove to Oswestry, had some valuable paintings which he thought he could not take too much care of. Afraid to trust them to the rough handling of the rail, he had them carefully packed in a

van, and committed them to the leisurely transit of the ordinary road. The journey was safely accomplished, all but a poor mile or so ; in fact, to within sight of Oswestry. At that point the luckless wain had to cross the rail, and some obstacle occurred, just as it got half across. At this fatal moment, an approaching train was heard, the driver got flurried, and before he could get his precious charge across, the remorseless engine came up — dashed pell-mell into the unlucky van, and sent all the treasures of art to the four winds. A minute later or a minute earlier, and all would have been safe. To have taken such pains to escape the disasters of the railway—so nearly to have accomplished the object and then to be smashed by one of the very accidents against which there had been such costly securities, made the whole thing a thousand times more provoking. It looked almost as if the genius of the rail, jealous and angry of the implied distrust, had watched its opportunity, and taken, at the last moment, a dire and effectual revenge. To complete the disaster, the poor gentleman went to law to recover damages, and was—non-suited!

Yours ever,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXVIII.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

1835.

MY DEAR MASON,

I have just been running through the "Memoirs of a Stomach" you sent me. There is some smartness in it, and a good deal of sense too; and yet it is impossible to get over the absurdity of thus personifying the respectable viscus, and making it chatter about anatomy, physiology,

and chemistry! This sort of allegory will only admit of the briefest possible handling and the lightest touch. Addison might have given a graceful short paper on it, after the manner of the fable of "Menenius Agrippa," which is almost as long as we can permit the separate organs of the body to talk to us or with one another. When the stomach twaddles away on pathology and metaphysics, copies physicians' prescriptions, and refines on the effects of "bismuth of lead" and "sesquicarbonate of potash," it is a little *de trop*. I am speaking of the *brochure* simply as a work of art—for really the philosophy of it is as sensible as if it came out of the brain instead of the stomach.

If we could suppose this poor patient drudge of an organ a conscious unity, and animated by a separate intelligence (as some philosophers have held opinions quite as absurd), who can express the ire it would feel at the treatment to which it is subjected? crammed to bursting with the *mélange* of an alderman's enormous meal; tight as a drum; stuffed like a corpulent carpet-bag; full of turbot, venison, salads, wines, and fruits; not an inch of free space for the "animal spirits" to move in! Yet is it expected to reduce the chaos of viands to order, and that, too, with such cruel despatch, that long before its task is half done, it finds the ruthless gullet pouring down more. How may we imagine it looking at its "kitchen,"—all the fires put out,—in despair; sometimes fairly getting into the sulks, and doggedly refusing to have anything more to do with the thing;—now, in a fury, ejecting the whole "indigesta moles" in a volcanic eruption,—now setting our old friends, "the animal spirits," briskly to work, under the hard pressure of necessity.

But I am not sure that it would not resent quite as much the infatuation of the hypochondriac who is hourly dosing it, and will never leave well alone! How would it ex-

plode, in mingled wrath and astonishment, when, coveting a hot-buttered roll and a cheering aromatic cup of coffee (which it feels itself quite entitled to, and fully capable of dealing with), it finds, as it gapes upwards in delighted expectation, the remorseless æsophagus, without any "by your leave" or "heads below there," sending down a horrid potion of "black draught," or still worse, castor oil! One can imagine the hurry with which it would summon its scavengers to clear the streets of the filthy tide, and throw wide the pylorus to let the abomination flow on! How would it congratulate itself, in such a case, if homœopathically treated! absolutely unable to tell where the poor trecillionth of a grain it was enjoined to take such care of, was got to! But suppose the search were vain, it would not matter; "Let it lie where it is"—the stomach might say—"an infinitesimal particle in an infinitesimal follicle will do no harm if it lie there for a hundred years! It is no incommodity to better guests,—it will give no offence, poor thing! I do not grudge it room!"

More than threescore species of the genus *DYSPEPSIA*,—so you doctors tell us,—and the varieties of these infinite! Fifty times as many substances which you doctors send down the throat to cure them, while of not a tenth can you certainly tell what chemical changes the subtle laboratory of the stomach may work upon them! What a "glorious uncertainty" in Physic, as well as Law! How little less than the cruelty of shooting a bullet of lead into the stomach from the *outside*, is that of firing a pellet of some more subtle mineral into its *inside*! And yet, you folks of the Medicis family (always renowned for poisoning) do these things with as little remorse as you would eat the wing of a partridge. Nay, you prescribe half a dozen things at once, though with every ingredient in the prescription the uncertainty of the ultimate product of the

vital chemistry may become still more hopelessly complicated, and the result more inscrutable. Surely, the way in which your "practice" terminates, must be often like that of the ludicrous "practice" with the Lancaster gun on board the "Arrow" off the Needles lately. The gunners fired—but they could trace nothing of the ball in its flight; fired again—still nothing came of it. While they were gazing in its *presumed* direction in stupid wonder, people came running in consternation from a totally different quarter, to implore the inimitable marksmen to cease their sport, for that their eccentric fire had been but too effective, only in an unexpected direction,—having nearly knocked to pieces the lighthouse!

Long may you have that greatest proof of a stomach, that you know not that you have any! I have long ceased, in this matter, to enjoy that "ignorance" which is "bliss."

Forgive all this idle *badinage* on your venerable profession, for which none have, after all, a more sincere veneration than I, when intelligently and cautiously practised—that is, as you practise it.

N. B. As I am about to visit you shortly, I think it is as well to add this "*placebo*." My kind regards to your "Catherine de Medicis."

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXIX.

TO R—— D——, A QUAKER.

October, 1855.

DEAR FRIEND,

Thank you,—or if *thou* be more pleasing, imagine it said,—for the pamphlet on the "Peace Question." I have



read it, and attentively, but remain where I was. Your views, in such a world, appear to me not only chimerical, but, if practicable, most dangerous, opposed to "the spirit" of Scripture, which you generally profess to revere, and plausible only by a slavish adherence to the "letter" — which, strange inconsistency! you profess generally to despise.

You say the words are express, — "Resist not evil;" "If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." Yes — and the Romanist says the words he pleads for transubstantiation are express: "This is my body." Pray, why don't you and he act consistently, and interpret other passages with the same literality? For example, you see in the immediate vicinity of your abused text; — "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; — if thy hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee." How is it that I do not see thee blind and maimed, worthy friend? You will say, "These are strong tropical modes of expressing the duty of self-denial and self-mortification, when our senses would allure us to sin." And, in like manner, say I, the words you abuse, are a strong tropical mode of representing the *spirit* in which we should receive affronts; the forbearance and gentleness with which, wherever we can, we should endeavor to disarm malice, the patience with which we should rather suffer any moderate wrongs than hastily resent them, or *any* wrongs rather than abandon ourselves to a spirit of diabolical revenge. But it is no warrant for our becoming *suicides*, by letting miscreants kill us "unresisting," if they please to do so; nor for quenching, when attacked, that instinct of self-preservation, which as manifestly came from God as any truth of Revelation, and which, in fact, except in the case of a Quaker here and there, always vindicates itself the moment life or safety is threatened, by acting, (as all our

instincts do) independently of our reason. A man is assaulted in the dark, suppose; if he has a weapon he strikes out, asking no questions "for conscience' sake," or for "reason's" sake, or for any other faculty; any more than he would ask, if thrown into the water, whether he is permitted to swim; or if starving, whether the roots and wild berries he snatches are precisely the best food for his digestion; or whether when he "plucks the ears of corn," he is not invading the "rights of property."

You will say, perhaps, that you do not forbid *passive* resistance, of which, indeed, there are singular examples, I am well aware, among the "Friends;" some of them so singular as to make the difference between "active" and "passive" not a little puzzling to any but a Quaker grammarian. But I know what you mean; you will say you are at liberty to struggle with your adversary with a view to disarm him. But this cool calculation in sudden encounters is as impossible as to do nothing. That same instinct which prompts to resist, without consulting reason, as little troubles itself to ask reason *how* it is to resist without doing any injury. If it has a weapon it strikes out, right and left, without any nice questions as to the precise topography of the blow it may inflict, whether on a vital, or a non-vital part; without asking whether the head of the patient be thick enough to resist, if it alight there; whether it will not be best just to dislocate the wrist or shoulder; or whether just so many ounces of weight, and no more, will not be sufficient for the purpose. You do not scrupulously calculate whether you may not smash the bone and make a "comminuted fracture" of the business instead of simple dislocation. You cannot tell your ruffian to stand still, that you may be pleased to drill or pierce him in a non-vital part, and that if he does not behave well, like a patient under a surgical operation, you may wound an artery and

do him a mischief, or that, as you mean him no harm in the world, but a deal of good, he ought to take it patiently! It is no time for such *sang-froid* on either side. It would as soon occur to us whether it would not be possible to take the miscreant, like trout, by *tickling* him.

And so, instead of attempting to argue against you, I shall try your principle by a case which was put to another of the "Friends," and ask you for a decision thereupon;—for *that* friend declined it.

An acquaintance of mine was travelling one day with one of your kith and kin, in a railway carriage, and they got on this topic. "Well," said my friend, "I will suppose a case. You are a settler on the borders of the red man; have got your log hut up, and everything in a fair way of being tidy and comfortable. You come home one evening from the clearings, with your axe in hand and your rifle on your shoulder; but see with horror that your house is in flames, and that a savage is pursuing your shrieking wife, with his tomahawk in his right hand and his outstretched left within a few feet of her dishevelled hair. There is just a moment to bring your rifle to your shoulder and save her. I simply want to know whether it would be your duty to fire?"

The "Friend" hitched on his seat, first to the right and then to the left, as if the shot itself had lodged in him, though *not* in a vital part, and at last said, "I tell thee what, friend; thou hast no right to *put such cases*."

Which I conceive was a complete surrender.

You will say, perhaps, that he was inconsistent, as said another "friend of peace," to whom I put the case. This last declared, *not* that he would *not* have fired, for he felt that it was rather too bold to say *that*, but that he *ought* not to fire! I turned to his wife, who happened to be sitting by, and asked her how she relished such doctrine. I promise you she protested most clamorously. I fancy, that

dying thus, she would have declared that her husband, and not the savage, was her true murderer.

I will be equally merciful with you as with him. I do not ask you whether you *would* fire — though the doubt that nature universally inspires is a shrewd argument against you; for what is it but saying that nature is so apt to confute your “principle,” that you dare not say when you are sure of being able to act on it? but I ask you calmly and conscientiously to say, whether you think you *ought* to fire?

However, thou shalt not answer me by letter; it shall be by thine own fireside, when I next visit thee, and thy pleasant wife shall be by thy side. And thou shalt look into her bright eyes, and say, “I do not think, Martha, I ought to save thy life, thou knowest, Martha.” I fancy she will know nothing of the kind. But I declare, beforehand, I will not believe thee till the actual contingency shall occur, and I find thee then acting up to thy principles. But “nature” will confute thee. Meantime, it is easy for thee to say what thou pleasest.

Believe me,

Dear friendly friend,

Thine ever affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXX.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

MY DEAR WEST,

I have been recently writing to our “Friend” Richard D——, anent his *principles* for the encouragement of murder and robbery. Till human nature is wholly sub-

dued to the Gospel, they are impracticable; when it is so subdued, they will be superfluous; for as no one will "wrong," no one need resist. But when *that* day comes, — and come it will, for men may be taught not to murder, though they cannot be well taught how to be murdered without strong objections thereunto, we may well guess the earth will be near its great transformation. *Your* hopes, though you anticipate the speedy reign of universal peace, — at least permanent peace among *civilized* nations, are less chimerical, and your projects too; and I cannot but wish you God speed. I think you sanguine enough, I own; and I fear are antedating by a few generations or so — perhaps a century or two.

You think, on the contrary, that the world is even now ripe for putting an end to all war by *arbitration*, — would to God it were! I cannot hope it while nations are so contrasted by civilization and barbarism, knowledge and ignorance; while empires dark as midnight in aught else, may yet have sufficient military science to make them ambitious of conquest, the only distinction nations in such stage of their history can attain or appreciate; and be powerful enough to be formidable to the world, not enlightened enough to be a blessing to it. This is just the condition of Russia at the present moment; and to convince the Czar Nicholas of the superior glory, as well as felicity, of peace to war, is about as hopeful a business as for Baillie Jarvie to induce Rob Roy to let his boys, Rob and Hamish, become "puir spinner bodies in Glasgow."

But certainly good, only good, can come from the discussion of the subject. Every one must rejoice in the ventilation of your opinions by means of the press, — provided you do not think it necessary to show as much pugnacity for peace as other folks for war, nor give your compatriots the notion — as some of you do — that you

are the most bellicose people in the nation. Guarding against that, your efforts,—your speechifyings, your tracts, cannot but do good; any thing that will make the nations reflect on the absurdities, atrocities, and (what they are apt to think much more of) the *expenses* of war, is a gain.

Certainly war is just as much a mark of the *barbarism* of nations *taken collectively*, as the principle and practice of private war are of the barbarism of any one nation. such a period, of course, is found in the history of every savage nation. The maxim then is, "*every man his own soldier*"—to fight his own battles and right his own wrongs; and as long as that continues, the people, of course, are savages. Is there any reason why we should not affirm the same of a family of nations, as long as they exhibit the same state of things? In the case of a single nation, civilization puts an end to the liberty of private war, as its very first, its initial achievement, and remits the arbitration of private quarrels to impartial judges. When nations, collectively, are *as* civilized in this respect as any one of those which deserve to be called so, the same will be done in relation to war; and till civilization has discovered the means of doing it, they must be content, whatever their individual eminence in science or in art, to be accounted—barbarians!

"But quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" Who are to be the judges, when each nation acknowledges no superior, and the final arbiter is found still in—force? No doubt, *at present*, the thing is impossible; but precisely the same difficulty must have been once felt in the case of any single nation that has been reclaimed from barbarism at all. When law asserted its supremacy, and put an end to private feuds, who can doubt the outcry made at first by many a "bullet-headed, iron-fisted old baron," who chafed at the limitation of his rights, and clamored for the priv-

illeges of his petty local jurisdiction? No doubt he would not believe that there could be, in the universe, any impartial umpire of his rights, but himself. Nevertheless, he became convinced in time that it was possible to deny him the felicity of his private brawls, and extinguish his absolute independence, without perilling his interests, or rather with great advantage to their security. So will it be with the nations, when they have learned to appreciate the blessings of the higher *international civilization*.

They will say, when any, who belong to their voluntary confederacy, propose to extemporize a little bit of "Donnybrook Fair," anywhere or on any pretence, "It cannot be allowed; we are quite ready to consider your differences, or to see *you* considering them in a peaceful way;—but we shall take the mere noise of a 'shindy' as a *casus belli*; and we, gentlemen, are five to one;—so put up your swords; *cedant arma togæ*." They would say, as Macgregor to Rashleigh and Francis Osbaldistone, when those hot-blooded young gentlemen seemed inclined to renew the duel in which he had interrupted them:—"By the heavens above me, I will cleave to the brisket the first man that mints anither stroke!"

Meantime, ye political economists! what a saving to the nations would even such a measure be. The huge armaments by which jealous nations now eternally watch each other, might be disbanded for ever; for a very small, though exquisitely disciplined and accoutred contingent from each of these nations, would make together a resistless army when embattled against any one refractory member. The expense of such a moderate police of the nations would be a mere bagatelle.

This, probably, will be the first way in which the community of civilized nations, entering into a voluntary compact, will attempt to realize your projects; that is, by

preliminarily knocking *him* on the head, whether right or wrong in his claims, who begins by defying the *pólice* of nations, and then giving due consideration to the differences which led to the row, in a congress of negotiators.

I can imagine — glorious day for the world, should it ever dawn upon it — when civilized nations joyfully giving in, one by one, their adhesion to the principles of this higher international civilization, shall proceed one step further, and solemnly inaugurate officers and functionaries, whose sole business in life shall be to carry them into effect. Methinks I see, in the course of ages, a nobler than the old Amphictyonic Council, representing the fraternity of civilized nations, consulting for the good, not of one people, but of many, and deciding, by common consent, not the petty differences between man and man, but between vast communities; a council consisting of functionaries, not, as we sometimes see now, extemporaneously chosen, but consecrated for life, like our own judges, to the study and practice of international law; segregated from every other function; and instructed to put off, as far as may be, the feelings of patriotism itself, and to assume the cosmopolite! Methinks it would be worth while to assign these judges of the nations a separate abode, — which, belonging to no nation, should be felt to be sacred to all. Surely none would grudge them the most beautiful island ever discovered in the recesses of the ocean, so long as they performed their office well; and how worthy of each nation to consecrate to such an office whoever was most conspicuous in it for probity and wisdom! What veneration would attach to this cosmopolite tribunal! What honor, to belong to this Sacred College of humanity — this Chancery of the Universe!

Nor is it visionary to imagine the *esprit de corps* of this sublime "College" such, that it would in a little time defy



all suspicion of its members being warped by the petty influences of *private* patriotism; just as we find *may* be the case with the judges of a particular nation. Surely, if our judicial functionaries have so clothed themselves with the spirit of honor, that no one has for ages suspected them of corruption, it may well be believed that this highest court would aspire to render itself more awfully venerable, and pride itself in keeping every particle of its ermine spotless as the snow.

And even if, in the course of a century or so, they made some wrong decisions, it could hardly be in any very important or flagrant cases; and as to the rest, — if they gave some rocky islet, which might support three families and twice as many cows, or grow with thrifty management five bushels of potatoes, to France when it *ought* to go to England; or drew the boundary line of a disputed territory on this side of a barren mountain-range when it ought to be on the very ridge thereof, I suppose it would be of little consequence compared with the infinite miseries which have sprung from military arbitration of the like petty claims; not to say that this too is attended with just as great probability, nay, far greater, of a wrong decision.

It must be confessed that the pretexts which have led to wars, and the folly with which they have been prosecuted, are not ill satirized in a fable I have somewhere met with.

A certain king, it is said, sent to another king, saying — “Send me a blue pig with a black tail, or else —.” The other, in high dudgeon, replied — “I have not got one, and if I had —,” on which weighty cause they went to war for many years. After a satiety of glories and miseries, they bethought them that it would be well to consult about the preliminaries of peace; but then a diplomatic explanation was first needed of the expressions which had formed

the ground of quarrel. "What could you mean," said the second king, "by saying, 'Send me a blue pig with a black tail, or else ——?'" "Why," said the other, "I meant — or of some other color. But," retorted he, "what could *you* mean by saying, 'I have not got one, and if I had ——?'" "Why, of course, if I had, I should have sent it;" — an explanation which was pronounced very satisfactory, and peace concluded accordingly.

But my proposed High Court of Equity for the world — my "Amphictyonic Council" of the nations, is a dream, one may say. It is so for the present; — but it may come true for all that.

Meantime, — though it seems a very paradoxical remedy, I am not sure but the best immediate security against war is to increase to the very utmost its destructiveness. I really think it would be worth while for every civilized government to offer the most liberal rewards for every notable improvement in the art of wholesale butchery. When war shall be to both parties as fatal as duels fought across a table, or as the fight between the Kilkenny cats, who "ate each other up all but the tail;" when ships shall reciprocally blow each other into the air the moment they come within sight of each other across the horizon, and armies like Gorgons, are too terrible to be faced; when each great commander, at once gloriously victorious and ignominiously defeated, may imitate Cæsar's laconic despatch, and say, "Vidi — et victus vici —," we shall hear of war no more. The increasing destructiveness of war, combined with the determination of the "big boys" in the great school of nations to make every "row," under any pretence, a *casus belli* — a reason for the immediate and general discharge of their preternatural ordnance at the offenders, would positively effect pretty much the same thing as our Amphictyonic Council.

God grant that wars may "soon cease;" — and that they sooner may, may they be made more dreadful, till every popgun be even as a revolver, and every revolver as a thunderbolt!

Ever yours,

R. E. H. G.

### LETTER LXXI.

TO THE REV. CHARLES ELLIS, B. D.

October, 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have read the little essay on the "Immortality of the Soul," as deduced from the light of nature. It contains nothing but the usual arguments; nor does the mode of stating them (so far as I can see) add to their force, perhaps I ought rather to say, diminish their feebleness; — for whatever the presumptions founded on certain facts, — especially the apparent absurdity of man's having faculties so disproportionate to the condition of an ephemeron, I hold that absolute conclusiveness in our reasoning on this subject is beyond us. It is true that *if* man be merely mortal, his whole nature, as far as we can conjecture, seems to be "made in vain;" and thus the Theist, at least, is justified in deducing a strong probability of a future state. But neither this, nor any of the other arguments usually urged to prove it, ever made me feel more than the probability of the conclusion; and I believe a fair examination of the wavering decisions of the best heathen philosophers (the truest test we can appeal to — for in their case we cannot suspect, as in that of a modern, that they were unconsciously indebted to revelation) will clearly prove to any candid reader, that they never arrived at anything bet-

ter than a faltering hope. Nothing, I believe, but revelation can *assure* us of a future state; it is the Gospel alone which can be said to have "brought life and immortality to light," out of the haze of philosophical speculation and the *crepusculum* of the Jewish dispensation.

Shall I confess to you that one of the strongest proofs of a future state (though it does not strictly touch the question of *immortality*) derived from the light of nature — (light of nature! perhaps we ought, if we would be exact, to call it the darkness of nature), is one that, logically, it is difficult to make much use of with a sturdy gainsayer: — just as with one who says he is without a sense of right and wrong, (though, by the way, you may think the fellow lies, and is a rascal,) ethical argument is impossible. Pray take care how you thread your way through the parentheses above, — for they lie uncommonly thick; I protest I hardly know where I am myself. — On looking back half a mile, I see I was saying that one of the strongest proofs of a future state was one that we cannot insist on with a gainsayer. — What I refer to is the *feeling*, generally growing stronger, as men approach death, that there *is* a future state. It has, too, all the criteria, by which we measure the force of an argument from *consent*. It has been acknowledged by an immense majority of all mankind; — and *especially* by the most elevated and comprehensive intellects; it has been the hope and the solace of the good; it has been the Gorgon of the eminently wicked. As to the former, αἱ δὲ βέλτισται ψυχαὶ μαρτυροῦνται ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχειν, as Plato says: The good *presage* immortality; not that that is quite the right word for the term μαρτυροῦνται, for which we have not an exact equivalent in English; but it means they have a "divine presentiment" of immortality. As to the wicked, — why, all history, proverbs, fiction, the drama, are full of *their* presentiments.

I have said that it is not a topic easily urged on a sturdy gainsayer, who with a steady countenance can say that he is unconscious of any such feeling; but it is of little consequence; first, because there are few such gainsayers, and always will be if we may trust the nearly unanimous voice of history. Secondly, because one is pretty sure the scamps *do* feel it in their secret soul, and if they do not, (as perhaps is the case, in their youth or their cups,) will in old age and on a death bed. There are few things more beautiful in Plato than the perfectly natural manner in which the placid Cephalus, in the enjoyment of a green old age, speaks on this subject. It is, I take it, an echo of an all but universal feeling—a witness to the constitution of humanity. When Socrates had asked him whether his contentment amidst the infirmities of age, and his freedom from its customary peevishness, might not be attributed by many to his wealth, which had spared him the vexations of poverty,—“for the rich have many consolations,”—Cephalus answers him that no doubt “there is something in that; but not so much as is commonly supposed;” and when further asked what he imagines the chief use of riches, replies that he deems it one very little thought of by most persons, namely, that of making restitution for any of the wrongs done in one’s past life; for “be assured, Socrates,” says he, “that when a man thinks he is going to die, he is filled with fear about things that never entered his head before. Those tales concerning a future state, which tell us that the man who has been unjust here must be punished hereafter, tend, much as he once laughed at them, to disturb his soul at such a moment;—and the man, either through the infirmities of age, or being now as it were, in closer proximity to the unseen, views the future more attentively, consequently becomes full of suspicion and dread, and considers and reflects whether he has in anything done

any one a wrong; and he who detects in his own life much of iniquity, resembling children starting in their sleep, is full of terror. . . . In conformity with this, I deem the possession of riches chiefly valuable . . . as liberating us from the temptation of cheating or deceiving against our will, or departing hence in dread, because we owe either sacrifice to God or money to man."

To be sure, if the old gentleman attached any idea of *merit* to such simple acts of righting wrong, his theology, as might be expected from a heathen, was not altogether "evangelical;" but the fact he bears witness to, — the intense convictions of a future state, which are apt to beset the mind as it nears the brink of the grave, is most significant, and one is ready to say, "There spoke human nature."

Of such a feeling — so general — I cannot but make much, though it may be little available with a captious disputant; and, in truth, in the case of any *general* feeling, even though reason had less to say for it than she has, it is impossible not to suspect that we are listening to an oracle, which issues from a deeper fountain than mere logic can fully explore.

For what else, after all, can we infer from the prevalence, not to say universality, of such feelings, but that human nature is so *constituted* that it cannot but so feel?

Hence, at all events, we may conclude, even if the feeling be a delusion, that it is in vain to argue against it; and that it is true wisdom, if we are to "follow nature," and not spend life in vain attempts to stifle her, to act accordingly. We may say to a man who denies or doubts of a "future state" much as we may say to the atheist. To the latter it may be said: Well, supposing there *is* no God, still if we are to trust at all to induction from the phenomena of all humanity in all ages and nations, mankind will believe there *is* one: therefore, if wise, you will cease to argue against it;

for you will only lose your breath. If there be no God, man has somehow, it seems, been so constituted that he cannot but arrive at the opposite conviction.—The like may be said to those adventurous speculators who assure us that all notions of moral differences—of a right and a wrong—are a delusion. If we can trust the philosophy of induction at all, as to what men will generally feel and think, from what they have generally felt and thought, such philosophers had better “save their breath to cool their porridge.” In short, much the same may be said in reply to any other paradox diametrically opposed to convictions, which, right or wrong, are founded in the constitution of our nature, and which, if men were wise, would bring many a long-winded dispute to a summary termination. Whether they arrive at truth or error, men have nothing else from which to philosophize than the constitution of their minds and faculties, and you may as well “bay the moon” as strive to alter the convictions normally founded on them. If wrong, the error arises from the constitution of humanity, and must still be supposed a truth. Hence the practical absurdity of all reasoning against the convictions of a material world; or to prove that our primary intuitions are all false. If they are, philosophy cannot mend them.

Finally, therefore, from the all but universal *feeling* that there is a future state, I quite think men are constituted thus to feel, and consequently it is at least waste time to argue against it; and then as to the *fact* whether there *be* one, since I do not believe that God who so constituted us is a *liar*, I at least believe that there *is* one. But if you want clear *proof*, I know of no other way than proving Christianity, and sending hopeful, but dubious, Nature to the school of Revelation.

Yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXII.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just come to the dignity of "spectacles," and am writing with them for the first time. I little thought, a few years ago, when I used to read with such ease the smallest print, that I should ever feel the want of these supplementary eyes; but finding, for some time, that my book was gradually receding from me inch by inch, I began to fear that I should soon have to fix it to the end of a stick, if I went on much longer; or that it would get away from me altogether. The fact is, the lens has lost a little of its convexity, and to spectacles of moderate power I have therefore reluctantly come.

On this I am induced to make this profound reflection: How easily might the comfort of life be marred by the mal-construction of a single sense; and what a plague would life itself be if all of them were mal-constructed together! If, for example, such pranks were played with us, as (were Atheism true) we might expect; if we were the victims of indefinite monstrosity — such *lusus nature* as to prove that nature was in truth more fond of "play" than "work;" if we found, as we well might, a ridiculous failure in her "*niss*" — her "endeavor" — as our Atheists, with contradictory metaphor, call her blind work (faith! she would need spectacles worse than I do), what a predicament we should all be in! As to the rubbish, that unintelligent "Law," according to some, — "Chance," according to others, (it does not matter a pin which, both being blind as newborn kittens,) has unconsciously tumbled things into the only possible "conditions of existence," so that if things were *otherwise*, things could not go on, — why it *is* rubbish;



for even if we could conceive exquisite order and adaptation the result of blind agency, it is still utterly false, so far as we can judge, to say that the conditions of our *well-being* are also the conditions of our *being*. . Man might have been an indefinitely different and very miserable creature, and yet have *existed*. If any such beings, on such an hypothesis, could have appeared at all, they might have been very execrable monsters — varieties of Caliban, — and yet have *lived*. The so-called “*lusus*” we do now and then see, might have been strangely multiplied and diversified, and yet the poor beast, Man, have groped, and crawled, and hobbled, and blundered through his threescore years and ten to a most welcome grave. Half mankind might have had the eyes of bats or owls, and the other half the feet of oxen or the paws of kangaroos, or the locomotive powers of the sloth, or the legs of a crane; and a great many of them might have been without hands or feet at all, — as some few are. Nay, for aught we know, intelligences, essentially like ours, might have been imprisoned under a donkey’s hide or a lobster’s shell; in which last case, as Sydney Smith said, “It is much to be feared that the monkeys would have made lobster sauce of us.”

In this matter of eyes, — how easily might the Great Optician who constructed them (or the *no* optician “Chance,” if it had constructed any eyes at all, could have done it too) have plagued us with such convexity of the organ, that, like the Stanhope lens, it would have revealed to us only what was brought into contact with it, and then in such unlucky perfection, as to make our own deformity as hideous as the Brobdingnagians to the microscopic eye of Gulliver; or, on the other hand, given us such a distant focus, that we should be obliged to recede half a mile in order to read the hour by the parish clock.

It is melancholy to think that we never duly value our

blessings till they are impaired or taken from us. "Another profound remark," you will say. Yet why is it trivial? only because we are a set of beasts. It *would* be profound to an angel — so profound, that he would regard it as inconceivable and incredible! Here have I been served by these good servants, my eyes, for forty years, and at last know their true value only — by looking through my spectacles! I have often used them unmercifully — have compelled them to play an everlasting game of focus-shifting and pupil-changing — enlarging and contracting — compressing and expanding — bobbing about with the axis and fiddling with the iris, according to the distance of objects and the degree of light. I have made them stare at a small print half through the night, when they have declared that it is time they should draw their curtains and get a little nap; and the poor drudges have never so much as winked rebellion till now! I never felt how precious they were before.

And ah! must we not confess to the same sort of thoughtless ingratitude in relation to yet higher blessings? Amidst "spiritual light," in the blaze of knowledge, and the enjoyment of freedom, how little do we think of the words of Christ to His disciples, — true of us as of them, — "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, the things which kings and prophets waited to see and hear," but neither saw nor heard. How differently should we feel, if we had been cast on times of ignorance and persecution; if, before we dared to peep into the tattered fragment of a Bible deposited in the most secret crypt we could find for it, we were forced to draw bar and bolt of our chamber door, not, as our Saviour said (or not for that only), that we might "be alone with God," but that we might be alone from man; — and then, carefully shading the treacherous taper, and trembling at every sound, as if we were doing a guilty thing, drag from its

hiding-place the Book of God, filch, as it were, in secret, the promises of eternal life, and, with the semblance of guilt and shame, steal into heaven! — or if, like many of our fore-fathers, we were glad to meet for worship by the pale moon or the safer star-light; or, safer still, on a stormy night in some mountain glen, or by the woodside or in the forest glade; and so, amidst the desolations of the present life, listen with a tremulous joy to the promises of a better. I fancy, in such cases, we should more truly estimate the knowledge and freedom we possess.

But it is the same with everything; man is least grateful for all that is most precious, for the very reason that ought to endear it most, — because it is most *common*. What so inestimable as light, air, and water? They fetch no price in the market; no one will give anything for them; for they can be had for nothing. God has given them without measure; but ought they, from their very cheapness, to be received without even the “peppercorn rent” of grateful thought and love? Ah! if it were possible for human tyranny, to do as it has so often done with mental light, with knowledge, with freedom, — to sequester the sunbeams, — to inclose to individual uses the “fields of air” — to monopolize and dole out at famine price stream and fountain, — how well should we understand what was meant by such words — “Blessed are your eyes, for they see the light of day; and your ears, for they hear the sounds of whispering winds and falling waters!”

How cautious should we be, lest our ingratitude in higher matters should bring, as it easily may, its own punishment; lest the very cheapness of our boasted immunities should lead us not only to undervalue, but, as a consequence, to neglect them. It is to be feared that God and holy angels, as they see us walking to heaven in the bright and peaceful sunshine, may judge us, for that very reason, encompassed

with greater perils than those who found their way thither under cloud and tempest. The storms of affliction made our fathers gird that mantle about them which the summer sun may entice us to throw aside. In the Valley of the Shadow of Death and in Vanity Fair, the Christian of honest John Bunyan "played the man:" it was when he trod the "drowsy enchanted ground" that he felt the access of that fatal lethargy. Sad to think that many a poor ignoramus may have made better use of a tattered leaf or two of the Bible, which, perchance, he could hardly spell, than we who can have it not only in every house, but in our memories; and may more securely have groped his way to heaven by the by-paths of dungeon and martyrdom, than we to whom the portals of God's temple stand invitingly open day and night.

Well really, after making such reflections, I begin to think my spectacles are becoming more useful to me than my eyes were; and that I see things more clearly than before, as well with the mental as with the bodily vision. If so, I shall find them useful indeed, and shall wish, for all my friends, similar infirmities to mine; nay, even stark blindness shall be welcome, if, in the words of Milton.

. . . . "celestial light  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
Irradiate."

Yours very truly,

R. R. H. G.

## LETTER LXXXIII.

TO ———

LONDON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

After the hints you gave me, I could have no doubt about the guilt of the young knave, and, taking him into my study, roundly taxed him with it. He as roundly denied; but it was of no use, for as fast as the false tongue vociferated innocence, the more truthful eye gave the lie to it. I therefore calmly stuck to my text, urged proofs, and from proofs proceeded to expostulations, and those tender topics of appeal which, *in foro conscientiarum*, avail more than the most subtle argumentations of lawyers. I told him of the ruin he was bringing on himself, the anguish he was causing his mother, till at length the boisterous tongue became silent, and the sympathetic eyes, that had saved him from being wholly lost, began to drop tears over the wicked tongue's prevarications. The tongue itself at last faltered out (it was a good deal less glib than before) its confessions. I hope he is not gone beyond recovery. I account none such so long as there is this schism in the "body corporate;" so long as conscience can get one organ fairly to contradict another; when ruddy shame sits on the cheeks, and lurking truth looks out from the eyes, however the tongue may bluster. The saddest of all spectacles is when Truth can get no organ to plead her cause; when the hardened brow and the unflinching eye, as well as the tongue, are in a league against her. Then, indeed, I give all up for lost. When Truth looks out no longer from the eye, when the light is darkened and the curtains drawn in that window of the soul, I know she lies dead, and is corrupting within.

It is curious to see with how much more difficulty the eye can be utterly corrupted than the tongue. And how,

when the latter is asseverating falsehood, with oath upon oath (impudent knave!) to make you believe it, the eye often still calmly does homage to truth, and looks, "yes, yes, yes," as fast as the other says "no, no, no."

"Betwixt nose and eyes a strange contest arose," says Cowper, in his amusing little lawsuit respecting the "Spectacles." It is a far more important and less humorous "cause" that is often pleading between the tongue and the eye. If they had a separate consciousness, how mad would the tongue be that the eye is apt to be such a blab and tell-tale, and so inopportunately turns king's evidence! "What need had you to put in your oar and spoil all?" one might imagine it saying: "why could you not be quiet?"

Wherever the seat of the soul is, I am confident it lies much nearer to the eye than to the tongue. This organ, as Talleyrand wittily but perversely said, (though he was not the first who said it,) was given man to conceal his thoughts; but that cannot be said of the eye. How the soul looks out from it! Even when the tongue is honest, it cannot utter truth and feeling half so well as the eye; it is a poor, imperfect, faltering, blundering organ in comparison. But in the eye the soul beams and kindles, and lightens and flashes the Truth in that light which is Truth's most glorious emblem.

But to return to the poor lad, who is, metaphorically, just now "in sackcloth and ashes." Take him again, and try him this once; I say not for his sake only, or for his mother's, or for mine; but for His whose loving memory is more powerful with you than all these. Remember "the seventy-times seven," and the text about "saving a soul from death and covering a multitude of sins," — and that other about "the thousand talents," and that again about "the merciful gardener" who pleaded "for the barren fig-

tree " — " Let it alone this year also ; " — and every other of the many hundred texts which may well arm us with love and patience, if we listen to them. Take him to the New Testament, instead of sending him to prison, and to the Saviour instead of to the magistrate ; and I will hope you will never repent it ; nay, whatever betide, I am perfectly sure you never will.

R. E. H. G.

P. S. I have been amusing myself with a couple of visits to the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park : surely the most entertaining place, — next perhaps to the Museum, — of all that this wonderful city invites us to inspect. I cannot be got, as many do, to pity the brutes in this their artificial condition. They pay a certain penalty, just as man does, for their *quasi* civilization. They give up, it is true, that trifle, their liberty ; I mean it is taken from them. Well, at all events, they cannot blame themselves for the loss ; and if they are but philosophical beasts, — and surely they have time and leisure enough for meditation, — they must weigh their counterbalancing advantages. Here is the lion, for example, feasting away daily in his West End den on excellent horse-flesh, without the trouble of hunting and killing. Let him poise, if wise, the advantages of his so-called prison against the starving freedom — the precarious pot-luck of his old cave, when his fasts were often, I dare say, inconveniently long, and he and his young cubs often never tasted butcher's meat more than once a week. As to the elephant, does he not live in a house good enough for a ten pound householder, and levy tithes of cakes, buns, and biscuits, from half the youth of the metropolis ? The Polar bear, it is true, is more to be pitied, this warm " Yule ; " he doubtless feels this Christmas that our climate is too sultry, and fancies the cold bath in which he laves to be

always tepid. Our north-easters, at which we shiver, are a mere sirocco to him, and he yearns for those times when, with the glass far below zero, he used to lie out on the icebergs by night, and bask *al fresco* in the cool beams of the Aurora Borealis or the genial rays of his cousin — Ursa major.

## LETTER LXXXIV.

TO THE REV. C. ELLIS.

Dec. 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Have you ever been to one of the "Reformatories for Juvenile Criminals" recently established? If you have not, I would advise you to do so. I had paid some attention to the *theory* of them, and had watched with deep interest the progress of public opinion on the subject, but never saw the inmates of a Reformatory till last Sunday. I had been requested by a friend to "say a few words" in the evening to the poor little wretches, and truly, as Sam Slick says, "it was a sight to behold!" There were about thirty seated round a long deal table, and I must say they behaved very well. They seemed quite under the command of their master, and had evidently been drilled to their devotional exercises with commendable precision. But such faces! such a variety of "villainous low forehead!" such furtive glances! such airs of put-on goodness and demure cunning! such sharp twinkling eyes, as they looked up at me! It reminded me of nothing so much as the devil looking out of his up-stairs windows.

I inquired a little into the mode of government in this little republic of juvenile thieves and vagabonds. I found, somewhat to my surprise, that they were under no very strict surveillance. To them "stone walls" did not a



"prison make." They were to conform to certain rules and be in at certain hours; but they were not restricted to any bounds of space, and if they chose to abscond from the protection and escape the discipline of the "school," nothing, as far as I could learn, prevented them. They might ramble about the country, and if they chose, might, at any moment, resume their old vagabond life and knavish ways, and qualify themselves for being sent to "prison." I know not whether the plan be similar in the other Reformatories; and, from some *escapades* of these young gentlemen which have been told me, I should rather doubt the wisdom of it. The liberty indulged may be, as the schoolmaster said, "an appeal to their moral sense;" but I am afraid the said "moral sense" would often fail to respond. It also afforded, he sagely remarked, a proof that they valued the refuge assigned them; it does so certainly as long as they continue in it. It enabled them, he further argued, to show that they acted not from *coercion*, but from a sense of propriety—at least from a prudential feeling; which is again true so long as they comply with the rules of the Reformatory, and duly make their appearance without a constable at their heels. Again; their non-abuse of these privileges showed, as the Reformatory Solon remarked, that they are not destitute of "moral feeling,"—which is also true as long as they do *not* abuse them. Lastly, and above all, say the advocates of such a plan, it allows the young criminals to converse with *temptations*—temptations which they must meet with when they return to the world. But whether such converse is likely to be improving to such persons is a question. To prevent their parleying with Madam Vice at all, for a time, would seem to be the wiser policy. However, if the object be to provide them with temptations, there is certainly no lack of that commodity in the neighborhood of the huge town, in

the depraved and crowded suburbs of which this young colony of incipient angels is located. "They may thus cope with temptations, sir," said the philanthropic schoolmaster, "which we can know they are capable of doing only by *experience*." Very true, when they *do* cope with them. But for all that, I should not think it desirable to try an infant virtue, just reclaimed from theft and knavery, with too many of those tests. If ordinary boys, however carefully nurtured, are, at school, strictly kept within bounds; if it would be deemed dangerous and foolish to let them, unattended by ushers and masters, have the run of the whole neighborhood, I cannot see that it is altogether wise to allow of such license to these less hopeful "hopefuls." Be so kind as to inquire for me how it is with the Reformatory near you; and if so, what is the *experience* of those who have the management of it. One of the things against which the philanthropy of the day has to guard is a too sanguine estimate of the degree in which criminals are still under the control of ordinary motives, and capable of appreciating, rather than abusing, the lenity which to a nature unfamiliar with crime is far more potent than severity.

One of the things that much struck me was the mode in which my congregation of young imps was assembled. The Reformatory is situated in a wild and lonely spot, about three miles and a half from the heart of the neighboring town; it stands in the midst of retired fields, and the access to it is by some deep and miry lanes. It was a pitch-dark November evening, and when I got there no soul was to be seen in the desolate Reformatory, except the Master and a friend of his who occasionally came up on a Sunday evening, on the same charitable errand which had brought me thither. I wondered whence my flock were to come, and how they were to be gathered together. I was

not long in suspense. The master took down a large horn, and going to the door, blew two or three loud blasts thereon, and in about ten minutes, in the young scapegraces came, tumbling in from the lanes and adjoining fields. It reminded me of nothing so much as Wamba and Gurth calling their herd of swine together; but I fear *it was the "swine," with the "devils" in them!* It was a most painful, as well as pleasing, spectacle.

It was pleasing to think of the good that *might* be done by this institution: that it insured to these young souls a pause at least in their career of guilt and sorrow—an asylum from some of their worst temptations—a break-water between them and the raging sea without. On the other hand, it was painful, inexpressibly painful, to see the vivid traces of wrong-doing already stamped on their young features—the scars already left of the conflicts with evil in which, all young as they were, they had been engaged, and, alas! in which they had been worsted; and above all to think, that many of them would, in all probability, after this little lull of passion, be again caught by the tempest of temptation, and be wrecked at last; that after being arrested in their fall, as it were, on a ledge of rock, they would roll over into the abyss! Most painful also was it to reflect that many of these youthful criminals had probably never had a chance of being otherwise! How many among them had been the children of vice, and consequently heirs of shame! How many of them, cast on the world by their abandoned parents, who had all the passions of beasts and none of their kindlier instincts! Some, perhaps, had been early orphans, and falling into hard or cunning hands, had had a better nature early perverted to evil. Ah! if those who brought these poor hapless ones into the world, could have been the invisible spectators of their wrongs, it would have been enough to poison heaven itself to them. Some per-

haps there were — most miserable of all — who had been kindly and tenderly nurtured, — had been in their dawn of life the objects of lavish cares and flattering hopes, — of a mother's morning and evening prayers; and at last of agonizing doubt and terror, heart-rending sighs and tears, as the enticements of evil companions and the strength of youthful passions gradually familiarized them with sin — vice — crime, — until the very images of home, its love, and its sanctities, the strongest ties that bind the youthful soul to virtue, had faded from the memory, and with them, for the present, the hopes of heaven! Yet not in vain may the poor parents have wept and prayed; for how often have the wanderers returned after long years of salutary sorrow — wise at last; perhaps long after those whose fond hearts they have tried and broken, have been safely housed in heaven. "Hope on still," one would say to such, "for not only is 'hope the only tie that keeps the heart from breaking;' but, you know, that you are expressly assured that in some way, though unknown, every act of 'faithful love' and 'loving faith' shall be recompensed a thousand fold." In thousands of cases besides that so inimitably described by Him who came so far to seek the lost, has the "prodigal" been reclaimed by that very school of vice and suffering which he chose, and which promised to qualify him only for perdition.

Yet, yet, in spite of all such mitigations — what a world it is! When shall we cope with its mysteries of sorrow? — But it will not do to go on thus. To you and to me, it seems a thousand times better, that this old hulk of a planet should founder for ever in the depths of space. But we *must* be wrong, since *He* keeps it afloat with all its freight of guilt and misery, with its cargo of slaves and convicts cursing, blaspheming, tempting, falling, agonizing beneath



the hatches, through all the horrors of this middle passage! And since He bears with it, who is both chiefly wronged by it, and more offended with the evil in it than we can be, let us learn to do what little we can, simply, faithfully, zealously, to diminish, if only by a grain's weight, the evil around us, and leave the great mystery of that evil, and of *all* evil, to the day when alone, if ever, we shall understand it. *Then*, if we understand it not, we shall understand Him, who permitted it, too well to doubt His wisdom; and, better still, have faith, if not knowledge, equal to the task of accepting the conviction of His unlimited goodness.

For the present, we, at least *I*, must not meditate much on this theme; — “that way madness lies.” — So I say to myself, “Up and be doing! What are the engagements of the day, you lazy dog?” — and that thought of simple trusting duty sets me on my legs again, just as the involuntary chirrup which accompanied the self-expostulation has, I see, made poor Carlo, who had likewise been in a deep fit of abstraction on a chair by the window, all life and spirits! Bless your honest old face, you affectionate beast. I wonder what *you* have been thinking of; perhaps of the origin of evil to the dog species — or the lamentable number of houseless, half-starved, ill-used hounds there are in the world. Thank you for your cheerful looks, old fellow! You often teach a lesson or two, better than any Cynic philosopher I know of. — Well, well, we will go out, if you like, but you need not tear my coat all to pieces, you brute!

And so, my friend, with this little play with my dog, up go the clouds which I am sorry to say too often descend on my soul when I foolishly think of such things as I but now dwelt upon. But the misty curtain is rising now under the cheering breeze which has sprung up. Fast up the hill they lift and lift, — and now I can see the sunlight

struggling through a rift here and there; and so I will out on the hills with Carlo, for the good both of body and mind; fare thee well.

But I invite you to resume these edifying speculations when we shall be less likely to be injured by them, and less liable to interruptions; say, ten thousand five hundred and forty-nine years hence, at your pleasant house in "Paradise Street," in the heavenly city — the metropolis of the "better country," in full view of the immortal verdure and glorious sunlit summits of the "everlasting hills." There will I wrangle with you with much delight for a thousand years! — But my dog gets impatient, and has set up such a clamor of barking joy, that I cannot write for him.

By the way, I hope my "faithful dog may bear me company;" so far I am an Indian. But, then, I do not know anything in Christian theology that absolutely forbids a faint hope of once more meeting with these fond companions, — these four-legged Abdiels — "faithful amongst the faithless."

Ever yours.

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXXV.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Have you read Kemble's "Anglo-Saxons? If not, it is worth your while. It has led me to rummage again into their history, and I found equal instruction and amusement in doing so. There we see the "incunabula gentis nostræ," — the cradle of the great English giant —

of that huge Colossus which now bestrides the world. In the Anglo-Saxon genius and institutions, we discern the germs, at all events, of that wonderful constitution, the great merit of which consists in its organic development; that it has assumed its shape and attained its stature by vital forces from within, not been hewn, fashioned, and built up from without. Like an oak, it was not "made," but "grew," and the acorn, whence all its leafy honors and all its wide-spreading foliage, was dropped into the soil more than a thousand years ago.

Some of the Anglo-Saxon institutions, however, were certainly odd enough; and of all the droll things which human legislation has concocted, their criminal code was surely one of the drollest. The precise *money-value* which they attached to the life of every man according to his rank, and the precision with which the loss or mutilation of every organ of the human body was appraised, reminds one rather of a butcher's shop, where Revenge might either purchase the whole carcass or haggle for a particular joint at its good pleasure. You might have a king, it seems, for "thirty thousand thrymsas," or about a hundred and fifty pounds; a prince for half the money, and a bishop or earl for a third. Only think! if such laws were in force now,—a millionaire,—some Baron Rothschild,—might take off half the bench of bishops, and never miss the money!

As to mutilations, nothing to a vindictive spirit can be imagined more convenient. Do you want to "break the thigh" of your enemy, or "cut off his ears?" Twelve shillings is the moderate price for the dainty gratification. If you are contented to "cut off the finger," you may save a shilling; if you simply "cut off his great toe," or tear off "his hair *entirely*," ten shillings will do; while if you are satisfied with merely "knocking out one of his front

teeth," you will have it, surely cheap enough, at six shillings!

Methinks, in these civilized days, we should soon reduce the system to convenient commercial forms. We should make our revenge, like other luxuries, a question of expenditure and income, and put down so much for it, just as for wine or cigars. Ladies, in their marriage settlements, might bargain for their *spite-money*, as now for their *pin-money*; while neat little Christmas bills might be sent in, exhibiting the exact debtor and creditor condition of the feud between you and your adversary. What pleasant items!

*John Smith, Dr., to John Brown.*

	£	s.	d.
To the loss of my little child's great toe . . . . .	0	11	0
To piercing my wife's nose . . . . .		9	0
To knocking out my servant's eye-tooth . . . . .		4	0
To breaking my boy's arm . . . . .		6	0
	<hr/>		
	1	10	0
Creditor, by having lost an arm in the last scuffle . . . . .		12	0
	<hr/>		
Balance due to J. B . . . . .		18	0

But I suppose our Anglo-Saxon forefathers would have found out admirable reasons for their fantastical system; equally fantastical, whether we consider its general principle, or the capricious rate of valuation of particular injuries. Some, perhaps, would even have found out that, however anomalous, the thing *worked well*, and could not be disturbed without the most fatal consequences to the whole common weal! In the meantime, we can see that in *one* respect it had a solid recommendation; for, like most legislative expedients of a rude age, it seems to have been a transition from a worse system—that of the unlimited



prosecution of private revenge. Anything that will put a legal limit to that, must be by comparison a blessing; otherwise each injury, sacredly consigned to revenge, must lead on to an infinite series of similar acts, or can terminate only when one party to a feud is absolutely exterminated. "I do not see," said some one to a New Zealand chief, "how your wars, once begun, can ever be ended; for you say revenge is a sacred duty, and each retaliation becomes a new aggression." The New Zealand chief, it is said, was rather puzzled at so novel an argument; but on reflection admitted that it must be so. Of course it must; as was the case with our Gaelic forefathers; among whom injuries were heir-looms, and, pretty often, the chief part of the ragged inheritance. A kills B, B kills A, C kills B, and so on, down the whole alphabet, to Z, and then all to begin over again. Pleasant times to live in, upon my word! Thank God, we live in better.

Yours very truly,

B. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR WEST,

I knew your friend Mr. G. was hasty; from what you say, he seems also to be sulky, which I did not suspect, and can less readily forgive. It is a beneficent arrangement of Providence, argues old Thomas Fuller, that a storm and a fog cannot come together; for if there is a storm, it clears away the fog, and if there is a fog, the wind is calm. Your *quondam* friend seems to show that that may be possible in the moral world which is impos-

sible in the natural. The vapors in his soul, like those on a mountain side when the clouds lie low, may roll and tumble, it seems, with the gusts of passion, but do not disperse.

Anybody may be overtaken with sudden anger, and when frankly acknowledged and repented of, it is easily forgiven; nay, I have known some choleric persons so sweetly and ingenuously own their fault, that one can hardly regret that it has been committed. But at all events the temptation is sometimes so swift and sudden—it is so difficult to intercept it by putting the soul into a posture of defence—that one may easily be betrayed into a transient emotion of anger. Many are the prescribed *prophylactics*, but I know none that is infallibly effectual. Some say,—“When inclined to be angry, bite your thumb or your tongue till the blood comes; *that* will operate a diversion, and give you something to think about.” Very likely—but whether it will tend to calm our passion may well be doubted. Others say—“Count a million or two, and by the time you get to the end, you will be quite cool.” Very true—but the worst of it is, the mind must be cool before it can think of any such remedy.

But *continued* resentment has no such excuse. It is a sin of deliberation, and is persisted in by wilfully nursing and petting it.

Do you remember that eminently beautiful passage in Paley’s “Moral Philosophy,”—one of the few in which he becomes genial and almost eloquent,—in which he sets down the reflections proper for appeasing anger, and which he calls its *sedatives*? They are all well-imagined, and many of them very touching, and can scarcely ever be revolved by a mind in the condition described, without tranquillizing it. But the *real* difficulty is to get the mind into the posture of pondering them; if that be done, the mind

will already be comparatively calm. — If Paley had been more of a metaphysician, he would have added to his other *sedatives* of anger the salutary effect of the very attempt to apply these “sedatives;” for the moment we begin to reflect upon and analyze our emotion, the emotion is gone. I hope your friend Mr. G. will begin to “analyze” without delay.

M. L. is going out as cadet to India, with all the sanguine feelings proper, at least natural, at his age, and utterly improper and impossible at any other. Envious magic of youthful imagination! which thus converts all the future into golden dreams, and presages not a cloud on the horizon even as “big as a man’s hand.” Well, it is best that it should be so; for if it were otherwise, where were enterprise — that child of hope and fancy? A picture brighter in tints than ever artist painted, is the lure which leads all young vigor to action. “Knowledge is power,” and so is ignorance, it seems; and if it were not, the world would stagnate. It is thus that Providence gently impels us to take our places in His School, and learn our lessons and endure His discipline; from all which we should resile fast enough, if we knew at the outset what a business it was like to be. Here is this lad already anticipating his return from India, (his mother of course is to be alive,) with no end of rupees in his pocket, and not a touch of liver complaint! In like manner, a young ensign no sooner puts on his uniform, than he becomes lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, in no time; nobody knows how great a man he is, — which indeed is all very true; and it is well if he is not soon Commander-in-Chief, and returning home, after another Waterloo, to hear the plaudits of a grateful nation, — all unwitting that he may perish in a ditch before the beard on his chin is fairly established. In like manner, the young lawyer is apt to fancy himself already Lord Chancellor —

has a vision of the woolstack, and of himself sitting upon it almost as clear as in a dream — quite as clear, it ought to be, for it *is* a dream; while the young lover — but there is no end to *his* romances! What a paragon of excellences and beauties is that young lady! and what wonderful success, for her sake, attends him in life! Yet he *can* make shift with little but love; “a cottage of content,” covered of course with woodbines and honeysuckles, adorns the waste of the future. If he wants it, he has in imagination ten thousand a year — or if not, imagination tells him that a hundred or a hundred and fifty will do just as well; it is absolutely inexhaustible, and, with “love and content,” can purchase, furnish, and maintain his paradise. Yet out of the dreams of hope, seldom to be fulfilled, are shaped the realities of the stern future.

Commend me to the moderate ambition of that New Zealand chief, of whom I have somewhere read, who, on the distribution of some captain's gifts, said that “his heart would burst if he did not get a hoe,” as some happier comrade had done. A strange paradox is the human heart, which not even the world can fill, and which yet, it seems, may go to pieces for want of a hoe!

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been reading, with intense interest, that curious and ingenious book (have you read it?) on the “Plurality

of Worlds, — and also a long article in reply. Like other folks, I of course muse with special eagerness on subjects which, like this, we have no possible means of deciding; and which if they were decided, can in no way concern us. All that is quite natural. Here have I been spending the last two or three mornings in a “Fool’s paradise,” — debating whether or not other worlds are inhabited, while letters which I had to write, and business which I had to transact in *this* world (which unluckily *is* inhabited), were all neglected! But doubtless, it is much the same all over the universe. The philosophers of Venus, — if she be inhabited, and can boast of philosophers, — are, I do not question, much more intent on finding out whether our world is inhabited than in attending to the business of their own proper planet. Meantime, is it not pleasant to think that our philosophers and their readers have so much leisure time on their hands that they can afford to look after the possible citizens of other worlds, and such expansive benevolence as to wish them all imaginable felicity? It is a question, I remember, in Martinus Scriblerus, whether “a possible angel be not more worthy of the divine regards than an actually existent fly?” From the keen interest with which a philosopher can sometimes speculate on this question of the “Plurality of Worlds” and the oblivion, in which, meantime, he may leave the affairs of this, one might certainly imagine that, in his estimate, a possible inhabitant of Venus is more worthy of attention than an actual inhabitant of Earth.

“These discussions are all very well,” I can hear some Utilitarian growling out; “but it would be better if your philosophers would spend their time in promoting the welfare of those they know exist and can benefit, and not gad about the universe in search of imaginary ladies and gentlemen of inaccessible worlds.”

Yet, with due submission to our Utilitarian, I certainly think the Essay on the "Plurality of Worlds" may subserve a very useful purpose; and if it had been a *little* differently constructed, I think it would have read us lessons entirely unexceptionable,—as it even now teaches us many valuable ones. I thought before I dipped into it (judging from report merely), that it was an ironical argument, designed, not seriously to call in question the probability of a "Plurality of Worlds,"—a conclusion which so many analogies favor, and which will, I suppose, be always adopted by nine-tenths of mankind,—but to show philosophers how little they really *know* about the matter, and how little reason there was for the confidence and dogmatism with which cosmologists have often chattered about such subjects. I say there was ample ground for reading the world such a lesson; for really the conceit of modern science had been getting on at such a rate with its "fire mists," its "condensations" of "subtle fluid matter," and its theories of "nebulae" consolidating into stars, that thousands began to think it was the easiest thing in the world to make a world; nay, that they could even see them *a-making*. I almost fancy some of our wise cosmogonists would hardly have blushed to head a chapter in a similar way with one in Knickerbocker's "History of New York,"—"Showing how that the creation of a world is by no means so difficult a matter as has been sometimes imagined."

On reading the book, however, though I think it *does* convey some such reproofs very forcibly, I find many passages which look as if the author seriously designed, not merely to challenge proofs of ingenious and plausible hypotheses, or rebuke the confidence with which they have been maintained, but to show that there is really a preponderance of argument in favor of the hypothesis that other worlds are not inhabited. On the other hand, his opponent,

the Reviewer, seems to me to speak as much too dogmatically on the other side; he lays much more stress on some Scripture phrases than they will bear; nor does he sufficiently remember,—when he gives his scientific conjectures of what is certainly *possible* enough, or even probable enough, — that the question which the author of the “Plurality” constantly urges, is not what *may be*, but what *is*; not what may possibly be true, but what is *known* about the matter.

That is assuredly little enough. We know but little even “of our next-door neighbor”—the moon; and what we *do* know seems to have pretty well convinced astronomers that she is not inhabited; we at the same time know that our earth certainly is. These are the only two worlds of whose condition, relatively to this subject, we are entitled to speak with any measure of confidence; so that the data seem lamentably meagre for a sweeping generalization either way. The problem, in fact, seems to be much like this;—Given one world which is certainly inhabited, and one other which most probably is not; to discover whether other worlds are inhabited or not. This sounds to me about as promising as this;—Given one river which *has* fish, and another which has none; to discover whether other rivers, of which nothing is known, have fish or not;—a hopeful problem for *à priori* speculation!

Yet, after all, though we *know* nothing about the matter, I suppose all the books in the world will not prevent, men from being of a very confident *persuasion*,—arguing from general analogy,—that the worlds above us are not all empty solitudes; but, like our own, either already, or destined to be, the abodes of life.

Nevertheless, to show how little we *know* of the matter, the hypothesis of the author of the “Plurality” or that of his opponent *may* be absolutely true; and, again, both may

be partially true. It *may* be that every one of the worlds around us is in the predicament in which the author of the "Plurality" so ingeniously argues this world must have been millions of years before life appeared in it. Even if *designed* to be the abodes of life, they may be only building, not built; not yet tenantable — the scaffolding all still about them; the carpenter, upholsterer, and painter, not yet admitted; or, if I may change the figure, the "crust" of these worlds may still be a-baking, or rather *cooling*, if that be the approved scientific mode in which the crust of worlds is made. Our world *may* be the only one thoroughly fitted up. On the other hand, for aught we know, this may be the last that was finished; while they all may have rejoiced in the completion of the process myriads of ages ago! Even the moon herself, on that side of which we know nothing, may be a paradise, and full of happy inhabitants; and the side which alone we see, may be the rocky foundations of her other glorious hemisphere — an "Arabia Petrea" bordering an "Arabia Felix." There *may* be in other worlds no life as yet; there *may* be only forms of animal life inferior to man; there *may* be rationality conjoined with the most diverse organization from ours, — intelligence essentially like ours, but indefinitely superior or indefinitely inferior to it; there *may* be beings with only one sense or two, and there *may* be others like Voltaire's Little Man of Saturn, or like "Micromegas" himself, with fifty senses, and a knowledge of "three hundred essential properties of matter;" there *may* be rational creatures, in each of the various planets, adapted by special organization to their physical conditions of light and heat, and local position in the universe, — affording, amidst essential unity of plan conjoined with endless modifications in execution, proofs of the inexhaustible fertility of the Divine invention, the " manifold wisdom of God;" and there *may* be, to



prove that "manifold wisdom" yet more conspicuously, **not** only rationality like ours, but even a physical organization like ours too, in planets most dissimilarly situated in reference to the sun, and most dissimilarly constituted in themselves; — and this by means of a modification of their secondary laws; of a special physical apparatus, which, for aught we know, may make Mercury as cool, and Saturn as warm, as the Earth. So that, on the one hand, while the planets are differently placed relatively to the centre of the system, they may have inhabitants organized very differently from ourselves, yet exquisitely adapted to *them*; or they may have inhabitants like ourselves, in virtue of distinct adaptation of their own local laws to such inhabitants; or, which again is very possible, both these suppositions may be true in different portions of the universe, and thus conjointly illustrate the infinitude of the divine resources. Here is a "plentiful assortment" of conjectures, any one of which may be true; nay, all of them at the very same time, in different regions of space! But as to what is *known*, *demonstrable* — how much is it?

The folks of other worlds, — supposing those worlds to be inhabited, — what would they say if they knew that we are writing books and waging strenuous controversies as to their possible existence? I fancy they would be inclined to say of us, "The inhabitants of that little world can have very little to do, since they can find time for the active pursuit of such visionary speculations!" But what would they say if they found that, in these and in many other equally conjectural inquiries, philosophers could not refrain from vehement objurgation and mutual reproaches? — sometimes even lost their temper, and charged each other with absurdity and stupidity? — nay, with grave tendencies to "Atheism," if others did not "dream the same dream" as they? Methinks our planetary friends would

say, that the "Know Thyself," which was said so long ago to have "descended from heaven," still remains there; and that, whatever else our philosophers have succeeded in fetching from other worlds, they had at least left that behind them. . . .

Ever yours, etc.

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

On recollecting what I wrote the other day, I half repent of some of the sentiments I expressed. I laughed a little at the busy idleness which sends us all roaming into other worlds when we have so much to do in this, and so little time to do it in, and perhaps it does look rather whimsical; yet, in calmly computing not only the pleasure but the benefit of the hours I have spent with my two authors, I am by no means sure that they have not been wisely spent. If they have not given me knowledge, I am not sure that they have not given me what is better. How elevating is even speculation, — if we be at all sober and modest, — on such a theme! What can so teach us humility, — our insignificance and weakness, — as such a little tour through the universe! How does even that ignorance, in which we are at last compelled to acquiesce instruct us yet more profoundly than our limited knowledge! How ennobling are those thoughts that "wander through infinity," — at least raising us above this world if they cannot reveal to us the condition of other worlds!

And even if ever so unprofitable, yet how inevitable, is the curiosity which impels man to such speculations! Who

can resist them? Who can look up to the glittering lights which steal out at solemn eventide, or blaze out all over the azure arch on a frosty night, without asking the questions which these authors strive to solve, or feeling himself the better for meditation on them?

And if there be inhabitants of other worlds, depend on it they feel much as we do. If there are folks on the other side of the moon, — my word for it, they have scrambled up to the ridge which divides their hemisphere from that seen by us, and peered (even though they should risk their necks by it) down on the earth; — to them a glorious lamp, about thirteen times the size of the full moon, hanging motionless in their sky! Yes, I see it all; their philosophers are full of conjectures about us, and have absolutely settled it in their minds that so beautiful an orb must be the abode of innocence and happiness!

We know they are a little mistaken in this matter; but then, alas! may not we be too, when we speculate in a similar manner about the diffusion of happiness, as well as life, in other worlds! This, I confess, is one of the most dismal thoughts which arrest us in our speculations on the "Plurality of Worlds." We are apt to imagine these beautiful abodes of light not only full of life, but of felicity also. How far may "distance lend enchantment to the view?" How far, as in other excursions of fancy, may we be the dupes of the seeming fair and beautiful? Do the shadows of evil lie as deep on the surface of those shining orbs, in spite of their radiant exterior to us, as we know they do on our world, though the folks in the moon may be felicitating us on our splendor, and the poets of Venus returning the compliments of our own to her, by *sonnetteering* us as an "island of the blest?" It will not do to dwell on this side of the speculation; so let us come back, my friend, while we are still only the wiser for our transient flights

through space, to the little circle of present duty, and leave the question of "Evil" to him who has said that "secret things belong to God; but the things that are revealed, to us and to our children;" and He *has* revealed that "He will make all things work together for good to them that love Him."

Yours ever affectionately,

R. E. H. G.

P. S.—On reflection, *why* should this matter of the Plurality of Worlds be so long and so doubtfully disputed?

*Why* should we have mere conjectures, when "modern science" can so easily give us certainty? Why does not "clairvoyance" settle the matter for us? What is the use of it, if it cannot determine such a trifling controversy? All that a clairvoyant has to do is to put himself *en rapport* with Mercury or Venus; and he can tell us all about the thing. As Hopeful says in the "Pilgrim's Progress," "Why should I remain in this dungeon, when I have a key in my bosom which will open all the wards in Giant Despair's castle." So say *I*; why should we remain ignorant on this question of the "Plurality of Worlds," while there are clairvoyantes in the land? And there is the more inducement, surely, for these knowing ones to speak, inasmuch as they must have it all their own way; none can contradict them, unless, indeed (which is but too probable), they contradict one another. If they tell us that the inhabitants of Jupiter have two heads and ten eyes, pray, my dear friend, can you or I deny it? But I forget; the thing is already done; see the revelations of the "Poughkeepsie Seer," and you will find everything plain. The inhabitants of Jupiter, in particular, are duly described, anatomically, physiologically, mentally, and morally. After this, who but must be surprised that the controversy between our philosophers should go on?

I wish our clairvoyantes, in the meantime, would just condescend to tell us whether Austria is meditating treachery this coming spring, and how many troops and what munitions are at this moment in Sebastopol. Strange perverseness of these gifted beings! They can tell us all sorts of useless things: how Mr. Brown is employed, in the two pair of stairs' back, No 10, of any street in London; what Sir John Franklin was doing on such a day at the North Pole; what sort of creatures inhabit Jupiter; and yet they won't let us know anything that is of any earthly use to us. How can they wonder that men are sceptical as to their powers, when they will not exercise them to any purpose? And strangely blind must they be to their own interests! What would not the "Times" give for such a specimen of "Our own Correspondent!" — what would not government give for such an agent! In the name of common sense, try and persuade your clairvoyant friend, T. S—, to do something for us.

## LETTER LXXXIX.

TO REV. C. ELLIS.

ARRAN, July, 1851.

MY DEAR ELLIS,

I think you would not easily imagine how a part of last evening was spent. Well, I will tell you. At the modest little *table d'hôte* at the Brodie Arms (there might have been, perhaps, half a dozen of us present), I, with some others, was watching the progress of a discussion between two of the party, on a subject which I imagine they would not have *chosen* to discuss in such a place, nor, I dare say, before an audience of strangers. But they got insensibly embroiled, and at last urged each other on to give the most

undisguised expression of opinion. The rest of us gradually left our commonplace chat to listen to them, except two, who seemed to think the discourse either not interesting or not important enough to detain them. "And what was the subject?" you will ask. Oh! a mere bagatelle, my dear friend, in these enlightened days;—it was simply whether or not there be a God! or whether man alone, so far as we know, has the privilege of conscious intelligence and personal importance in the universe! Of the two combatants, one was an Atheist, and the other a Deist.

Confess, now, that you would not have guessed that such a subject would have been discussed at a *table d' hôte*. I will add that you would not often hear it more acutely discussed in a college. Among the four or five of us who became gradually interested listeners, was a citizen of Glasgow,—a plain Christian man, who had probably never heard such undisguised impieties so calmly avowed and discussed before. He sat, for the most part, in a sort of fascination of horror, yet a highly interested and intelligent listener; for to many a Scotchman a little bit of "metaphysics" is as dear as "oatmeal porridge." As he listened to the reckless challenging of truths, which seemed to him clear as the light, and infinitely more precious, he reminded me of nothing so much as a bird under the fascination of a serpent. At the close, however, he broke in with a very decisive expression of his opinion, and showed that, however he might have been fixed for a while by the rattlesnake gaze of a live Atheist, he was not going to jump down his throat.

And what was the general result, you will ask, of the controversy? Did it not end, as most others end, in convincing nobody?

Perhaps so;—but not in confuting nobody. Each

was victorious, triumphantly victorious, in defeating his opponent.

The issue was a little like that which, according to Sully, attended a certain stratagem in the wars of the League. The citizens of the town of Ville-Franche went out at night to surprise the neighboring town of Montpazier. That very same night, the good folks of Montpazier had taken it into their heads to surprise the town of Ville-Franche! Each party accoutred a sufficient force, and each took a different route; each found the enemy's quarters obligingly vacated for the other's benefit; and when morning dawned, each party found itself at once successful and unsuccessful — victorious and defeated! “On pilla, on se gorgea de butin; tout le monde se crut heureux jusqu'à ce que le jour ayant paru, les deux villes connurent leur méprise.”

Among other things, the Deist affirmed that he had an “intuitional consciousness” of the Infinite and of the Deity. The Atheist denied that *he* was conscious of anything of the kind. Now, when one finite mind declared that it had consciousness of the infinite, and another finite mind denied it had any such consciousness, it is hard to see how the controversy could go any further in that direction; — unless indeed the Deist had told the Atheist that he *lied*; which I suppose would not have ended, but rather changed the *nature* of, the controversy.

The Deist then got on to the old and, as I believe, irrefragable argument of the “Marks of Design” in the universe and every thing in it, and which, he contended, prove an “intelligent author.”

The Atheist did not deny that there were plenty of *marks* of design; that is, just such things as *design*, supposing the universe the work of an intelligent author, *would*

have exhibited; but he affirmed with the great Comte, that though the *adaptations* of things, one to another, were infinite, they were not really indicative of design at all, but were simply “conditions of existence;” that if man’s eyes were not so and so constituted (surely an undeniable truth), he would not see, and that because they *were* so constituted, he *did* see (equally undeniable); and that is all that is to be said! Who but must be satisfied with so clear a statement?

The misfortune is that it explains nothing, but leaves the whole argument just where it was. I must do my Deist the justice to say that he exposed this sophism admirably; he showed that it still attributed all the *adaptations*, which seem to indicate design, to blind chance or blind necessity christened with a “new nothing,” an unmeaning name; — it being still asked, how so many *conditions of existence* came so happily to conspire; as before it was asked how so many “marks of design” came to exist without any designer? He also remarked that manifold adaptations are not “conditions of being” merely, but conditions of well-being; that man doubtless *could* exist though he had a score of deformities — a hump on his back, or club feet; — that he *could* put food into his stomach, though he had no palate which made it pleasant to do so, and so forth. I am sure he handled his argument capitally, and, I thought, M. Comte cut a very sorry figure.

But he further argued that supposing all these apparent “marks” of design, apparent only, yet the mind of man was so constituted, its “conditions” of logic such, that the immense majority of the race could not help, for the life of them, judging these “adaptations” to be the effects of design; that this was confirmed by all experience, and that therefore, *if* Atheism was the truth, still it would always be rejected, and its advocates in fact might as well keep



their mouths shut. He affirmed that they *must* always be, as they ever had been, a vanishing fraction of the race. "Men will still dispute," said he, laughing, "whether there ever was an Atheist or not. Nothing can be plainer from all history than that man, however he got it, has a '*religious faculty*,' and will be a religious animal."

This nettled our Atheist, and he retorted very cleverly, — that if induction from the phenomena of the "religious faculty" inferred a God, it equally inferred ten thousand, of the most dissimilar attributes and the most grotesque characteristics; that the Deist must take the induction from the phenomena of the race generally, and not from two or three Deists in a corner, who were fond of stealing their "Monotheism" from the Bible they abjured, and then setting up as original oracles; that the indications of religious truth are to be gathered from the phenomena of entire humanity, and the incalculable majority of men in all ages have been gross idolaters; now if so, as neither Atheist nor Deist know anything of a doctrine of "human corruption," but deny any such, it must be inferred that the "religious faculty," as its *general*, that is, normal manifestation, pointed only to Gods, which, for aught we can see, are little better than none! From the Deist's "stand-point" it was difficult to reply to this.

But when the Atheist came to demand the *completion* of the Deist's system, and to ask how much he could certify of God; what were His *aspects* towards man; what man's position and duties; what man's origin and destinies; whether he was immortal or not, and so on: in a word, when he came to press the Deist on points, without a solution of which his theory of a deity, to such a being as man, is stark naught, ignorance left him in as sorry a plight as his adversary had been.

"Power and wisdom palpably present in the universe;

goodness, extensively ;" — he could get no further than *that*. To all the questions man feels so intensely interested in, he could answer only by conjectures and assumptions, and these the Atheist twitted him with often filching from the Bible he derided. "You may see," said he, "how little man knows on such subjects by looking at him as he has been in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand since history began ; you may see how little he knows, and how blindly he hopes and fears, on these subjects. And you cannot, as the Christian can, talk of depravity, — for you, like me, deny it."

On the whole, the Scotchman was delighted with the issue of the controversy. "Ye are twa stalwart chieks," said he, — "nae doot o' that ; ye are like twa fighting bulls of Bashan that have got their horns sae fast locked, that it is hard to see how they are to get loose, except by pulling ilk ither's heads aff. Faith, and I dinna ken that it wad muckle matter. But ye hae proved one thing, ony way ; that I canna afford to do without my Bible."

I confess I felt much the same. It, and it alone, so far as I know, supplements the meagre truth of Deism, and enables us to baffle, if we cannot wholly remove, the difficulties which chiefly provoke to Atheism.

Yours very truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XC.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR ELLIS,

I wish I could gratify you by complying with your request, and give the very words of the entire dialogue to which I referred in my last letter ; for it was very instruc-

tive and interesting. But it is impossible to recall it exactly, nor can I pretend to give you in full even that part of the argument for which you more particularly ask, and in which you seem to be so much interested: I mean that in which the Atheist replied to the Deist's undeniably strong argument derived from the religious manifestations of human nature in general. The retort would be easily evaded by you or me, or any Christian, but from the standpoint of the Deist who ignored the fact of aught abnormal in the present condition of human nature, it seemed to me, (what the Deist's silence confessed it to be,) quite unanswerable. But, though I cannot recall all the arguments used, still less the expressions, you will not be far out if you imagine the dialogue proceeding somewhat on this wise :

The Deist, as I told you, went on triumphantly for some time with his argument from *induction*, and I confess I could hardly see how it could be contested ; when his adversary said, very quietly, "You believe that the human mind is so *constituted* as to believe the existence of a God?"

"Assuredly," said the other.

"That is, you believe that man was endowed with a mind framed in such a way that he could not but arrive, in the course of its normal development, at the idea of such a being!"

"Certainly."

"And you believe that man is now just what he was when created. You do not believe that he has *fallen* from an originally higher state; you reject all the fables of the 'Golden Age,' the transient 'Paradise' of Genesis, and all the *other* fables by which so-called revelations affect to account for the phenomena of presumed moral deterioration on the part of miserable humanity."

"I acknowledge that I reject them all.

“For you are the disciple of Reason alone, and have nothing to do with Revelations?”

“Nothing.”

“*What* idea of God does that Reason, thus innate in you, instruct you to form of the Deity?”

“That He is One, Infinite, Eternal, Uncaused, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and perfectly Benevolent.”

“Is *that* the idea which so many as one out of a million of our race have formed? Is it not the conception of the very few? ONE God! have not the immense, the overwhelming majority of mankind believed in hundreds? in thousands? Have they not had ‘gods many and lords many?’ Gods coordinate and gods subordinate? Gods of different powers in the universe taken jointly, and gods of them taken separately? Gods of all objects natural, gods of all objects artificial? Monkey divinities and cat divinities, sacred cows and sacred calves? Divinities hewn with a hatchet out of a block of wood, and equally divine blocks of wood without even the hatchet being employed upon them? Nay, has not man made out of the very same block (as the Hebrew prophet said) the billet that kindles his fire, and the fuel that heats his oven, and the God which he bows down to and worships? Has not the Fetichist prostrated his senseless soul, in adoring silence, before a bit of tinsel or a glittering pebble; and has not the Pantheist, with equal sense, called all things — pebbles and tinsel included — the Deity collectively? Though it is sometimes said that man’s gods are usually made like himself, I must contend that they are far below himself; destitute even of that spark of intelligence which himself boasts of possessing. He generally takes care before he condescends to worship his god that that little spark of reason shall be put out! Or rather,” he continued sarcastically, “I think it may still be said that man’s gods are usually a little above him —

simply because they, at all events, have not thought *themselves* divine, nor worshipped what *themselves* have made. An Egyptian may adore a cat, a Brahmin a sacred cow; but the cat and the cow neither believe themselves divine nor worship one another. And if they could but comprehend the absurdity of wise man's genuflexions and offerings, they would certainly break out into one of the distinguishing characteristics of humanity, and indulge in a hearty 'guffaw' at their human adorers. Some of you talk about the necessary inference that, as man did not create himself, he must owe his existence to a God who is uncaused; rather, from man's general practice through all races and all ages, you ought to argue in a different way, and say that it is one of the characteristic inferences of man's wise head, that a god must be *created* before it is to be adored: for man, you see, in the immense majority of cases, devoutly worships the work of his own fingers, — generally clumsy enough! Instead of his gods fabricating *him*, and hence, having, as you say, a title to his worship, he creates *them*, and then adores them for the attributes he has gratuitously bestowed. You seem to think that it is the *normal* condition of mankind to break out into the poetry, — sublime poetry, I admit, — of the Hebrew bard, as he gazed on the spectacle of the starry heavens: — 'When I behold the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?' On the contrary," said he, laughing, as he pursued the contrast of men in general, "man when he has surrounded himself with his artificial divine deformities, the divine monsters he has turned out of his own workshop, his little grotesque images of clay, wood, or stone, and contemplates their ugly perfections — seems to say to the frights — 'When I behold the idols which *my* fingers have made — what is man in

comparison?’ And sure enough he may well ask the question. Now if you say that the bulk of the species have looked beyond these works of their hands, and have recognized a supreme God under these fantastic forms, I deny, 1. That many of them have; 2. That of those who have acknowledged that there are ranks and orders among their divinities, very, very few have even approximated to that comprehensive, and I will even add, sublime abstraction by which *you* have defined the Deity. As to the absolute Monotheists,—they have ever been a most miserable minority. Even those who have looked beyond subordinate deities in any sense, and acknowledged a Father of Gods and Men,—such as Jupiter, for example, (by my faith, he was the father of a good many of them, by all accounts—the name was not ill-bestowed,) have been comparatively few. As to Jupiter, as generally conceived, who would not just as soon have worshipped any of the rabble that filled his Olympus, as that old *roué*! The sort of Supreme God recognized by some Polytheists has been far enough from resembling that notion you have given of Him, and which I suspect you have stolen from Moses and the Bible, like the rest of you Deists. But as for the *mass*—the idea that these—the myriads of gross idolaters—have risen, in the very midst of their grovelling, crawling superstitions, to the conception of such a God as *you* define, is absurd; the mere circumstance that they are idolaters proves that such conceptions are veiled to them. To tell me that a man has any sublime ideas of an infinite spiritual Creator, an infinite Monarch of the universe, when he is all the while moping and mowing in adoration of a monkey, or a block of his own hewing, is nonsense. I can understand a little what you mean (though I deny its force as argument) when you talk of looking up from Nature to Nature’s God: I understand what you mean when you talk of rising

from 'effects to causes' — though I deny that the one are effects, and that the 'causes' are any other than *imaginary*; but that idolaters — who are the bulk of mankind — should 'look up' from the idols of *their own making*, to Nature's God, — that is, from 'effects' which they worship *as causes* to a Supreme Cause of all things, — is to me quite incredible."

"Well, and what is the object of this long tirade?" said the other, quite innocently, and apparently unconscious of the retort preparing for him.

"Why, that if you have any candor, you must acknowledge that the all but universal idea of God is not *your* idea; that yours is the idea of a very *few*; that in the ratio of a million to one, the notions of men have been the most enormous and grotesque parodies on what *you* would call the Deity!"

"Certainly — I won't, for I can't deny it; but still they have had the idea of a God; in harmony with the conditions which I have represented as a fundamental law of the human mind."

"A God! — an idea of ten thousand you mean. *Why* did you say you inferred that the formation of such a notion was one of the conditions of the constitution of the human intellect?"

"Because in the immense majority of mankind, we find some such idea developed. The Atheists are, and ever have been, such a miserable minority."

"And just so I say of the Monotheists. *Ergo*, if I grant that it is one of the conditions of the human mind that it should form *some* conception of a God, — because it is the actual condition of the immense majority of mankind that they have it, — you *must*, in like manner, grant that it is one of the conditions of the human mind that it should form *most various, hideous, odd, grotesque, imperfect, degrading* conceptions of a God, for such have been the con-

ceptions, such they are still, of the immense majority of the race; those who have resembled you, my deistical friend, having been ‘a most miserable minority.’ You say man is as he was created; you say that he has just as much reason and conscience as he ever had; and you see what follows from an induction of *facts*. If man necessarily forms *some* idea of a God or gods, we must infer by parity of reason from *induction*, that he must ever form most unworthy and degrading notions of him.”

I was curious to see how the Deist would reply to this argument; I considered how I should answer it myself if I were in *his* place. If I believed, as he did, that just what God had created man, such man is now; that man still framed his notions of God, and of the worship due to Him, in obedience to that law which God had originally impressed on his nature, and under the conditions of thought originally assigned; it was hard, in the face of such general results, to infer anything else than that either God had made a strange mistake in *constituting* human nature, if he really designed it to have that just and consistent idea of Him proclaimed by the Deist; or that he never designed anything of the kind;—or that, as the Bible says, man is no longer what God made him. This last solution, our Deist’s *reason* had thrown aside contemptuously; and no outlet to the ravine of rock seemed possible in that direction. I looked every way carefully, but could discern no mode of escaping; it was a *cul de sac* to a Deist.

Thus it seemed indisputable that the Atheist and the Deist were both perfectly right; successful in confuting one another, without the possibility of escaping counter-confutation. The Deist was right in maintaining that the fundamental laws of the human mind necessitate, and must ever lead to the adoption of, *some* notions of a Deity; because from induction we see that in the immensely greater



number of cases, they have done so; and the Atheist was right in maintaining that the equally universal fact of man's having formed notions of a Deity utterly degrading, grotesque and unworthy, shows that this also, in the majority of cases, is the inevitable condition of the human mind, as proved by a similar induction; so that it seems — strange paradox! — that man is generally necessitated to discover a God, but that *in general* He will be such that it hardly matters two buttons whether He be discovered or not! "Therefore," said the disciple of M. Comte, in conclusion, "as you twit me with the uselessness of *my* mission, and the absurdity of attempting to convert mankind to my views (which, I frankly acknowledge, have ever been confined to a very few), you must permit me to remind you that the folly of your efforts for the illumination of mankind is equally egregious. Indeed, those who have held *your* sublime views of the Deity, — pure monotheists, — have been scarcely more numerous — except as they have derived their notions from the Bible revelation, which you reject — than the Atheists themselves."

My deistical friend made one desperate effort to recover his ground; but it was very slippery — and he fell. I had no hope of his maintaining his footing; but even *I* was surprised at the little he could reply to the argument. The Atheist pursued his advantage and said, complacently enough, "I must, nevertheless, contend that you are chargeable with *one* absurdity from which I am free. Believing in *no* God, and that the human mind is merely an assemblage of "conditions" without a final cause, it is not at all wonderful to me that some of its notions should be strange, odd, and incongruous; but if, as *you* say, man was formed by that superior and matchless intelligence you adore; if he is now what that intelligence framed him, and equipped with laws of thought which necessarily develope a knowl-

edge of the Deity; how is it that he should every where exhibit the curious phenomena I have insisted on? It is utterly incomprehensible. That man should fancy there is a God when there is none, may be odd enough; but that when God has created him so as to know and adore Him, man, being still possessed of all that God had originally endowed him with, should fail to find Him,—is to me an unfathomable mystery.”

“What answer there is,” said I, interposing, “or can be, to this taunt, on the deistical hypothesis, I know not. Permit me to tell you, however, that it is of no avail against Christianity; for the theories of Christianity and Deism are *antipodal*. Man, as you have insisted, does form, in the immense majority of cases, and ever has formed, the most degrading and absurd notions of the Deity; but Christianity is expressly founded on this admission,—on the lamentable reality of all the difficulties, which you have urged;—it acknowledges as its foundation that while man has a nature which prompts to religious thought and feeling, that nature is corrupt—“and that the world by wisdom knew not God.” He was polite enough to acknowledge that the argument he had used did *not* affect the theory of Christianity—except as affecting every other theistical theory; that is, as ultimately involving the consideration of the permission of such a state of things as required the Divine intervention; in other words, as involving the problem of “the origin of evil.” I told him that *that* was an abyss which I, for one, had many years ago explored as far as I intended, and was glad to have groped out with my torch still unextinguished; but that, however deep, it left the arguments against Atheism unimpaired, and being in itself utterly unfathomable, could justify no rejection of those arguments;—unless we are at liberty to argue against what we *can* comprehend from

what we *cannot*. To this he did not reply; and in truth it was high time to light our candles and go to bed.

Ever yours.

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCI.

TO A FRIEND WHO HAD BECOME A DEIST.

1832.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

For, in spite of your doubts, I shall not cease so to address you. You say that as you are no longer a Christian, — more's the pity, say I, — you suppose I cannot think anything worthy of the name of "friendship" can sincerely subsist between us; that persons whose sympathies must be so imperfect, whose intercourse, restrained and frigid, while it lasts, must, after a brief interval, be so sadly broken, and broken for ever, can hardly be friends.

I, on the other hand, shall maintain, in spite of it, that if you have lost all sympathy with me, I have lost none for you; — and that even as a brother who has an infidel brother, or a father who has an infidel son, would prove himself a strange Christian brother or father by renouncing brother or son, so a Christian friend would prove himself a very odd Christian and a very odd friend, who should abjure one who *has been* his friend because he is no longer a Christian. On the contrary, as a Christian father will feel and show a double solicitude and tenderness towards his erring child, so must a friend discover not a diminished, but a quickened anxiety for the welfare of an erring friend.

The aspect of his love will be indeed changed, and sorrow will mingle with it — but, believe me, my friend, it will be love still.

Strange doctrine this of yours! It is as though I were told that a man, fearing a friend had lost his way in a midnight passage of the mountains, might, with a quiet conscience, at once give up all hope of seeing him again, and instead of setting out with light and guides to seek him, coolly sit down in the chimney corner, saying, "Well—no doubt the poor soul is gone to the devil—but it can't be helped!"

I have not so learned Christianity; nor was this the example of Him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost;" who, for that purpose, left safe in the heavenly fold the ninety and nine that were in no danger, and sought in the wilderness the poor wanderers whose perils quickened, not repelled, his sympathies. If He was called, though He was "without sin," the "friend of publicans and sinners," I shall not hesitate, who am but a sinner myself, (albeit, I hope, a Christian,) still to call by the name of "friend" one who is a sinner even as I.

The text you quote so tauntingly, (forgive me for saying so,—but it *is* tauntingly,) "What fellowship hath Christ with Belial—or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel," is nothing to the purpose. That text is intended to forbid the *voluntary formation* of close and ensnaring intimacies with those who are estranged from the Christian life in either sentiment or character. No doubt a Christian father would not choose to have an unbelieving son, if he could help it; and in the same manner, neither would a Christian man *choose* his special intimates among those who are alienated from his Master. But a parent cannot repudiate his parental relation because his son becomes an "unbeliever;" and neither can a friend repudiate a friend. When friendship has been formed previous to the existence of any such disturbing causes, the bond cannot be rudely broken.

You would have done well to look into *other* passages. The New Testament prescribes, with that remarkable freedom from fanaticism, which, if its writers *were* fanatics, is a very singular characteristic, the terms of intercourse with an unbelieving husband, wife, or child, and by parity of reason, with an unbelieving "friend;" and what countenance is there for your taunt? Nay, with the unbelieving world in general, Christianity not only permits the ordinary transactions of life, but enjoins, in all such transactions, that uniform courtesy, kindness, and benevolence which, in fact, involve all the offices of friendship, and must of necessity often lead to it.

So far from the Christian being forbidden to come into contact with the "unbelieving" world, he is told the express contrary; to forbid this would be to tell "him to go out of the world." It is only to a "brother that walks disorderly" that he is commanded to act thus; with *him* "not even to eat,"—neither to give or exchange hospitality. Now—alas that I should say so! you are no longer "a Christian brother,"—but I insist on it that you shall still be a "friend." So you must suffer me to address you in the old style, and if it will at all accommodate your scruples, I will call you one that is "without," and certify to the fact that you are *not* a Christian. If this will not satisfy you, and I must needs proceed according to the rule with which you upbraid me, that of treating our offending brother as "a heathen man and a publican;" still you will be pleased to recollect that it is after repeated admonition that that is to be done,—and I have by no means "admonished" you enough yet.

"Pray do it," I imagine you saying, "without the admonition." No—I shall not; I shall persist in bearing with your offences, not only the "seven times," but the "seventy times seven," before I finally release you.

So that, in fine, you see I am a "burr," and shall "stick."

You let out the secret, I suspect, of your perverse scruples as to the possibility of our continued friendly intercourse. I say perverse, for there is seldom any scruple with gentlemen in your position — when you say that you hope, if we are to keep up our former correspondence, I am not going to trouble you with that "intolerable" subject, — the "evidences of Christianity!" This, and perhaps a little disposition to taunt me with the supposed bigoted exclusiveness of the Christian rule, must account for your unusual scruples.

As to the evidences of Christianity, never fear; I am so far from intending to trouble you with them, that I am about to show you how you may annihilate Christianity altogether; not by directly *attacking* it — that, I regard, as *proved* by long experience to be useless — but by establishing a better system! As Leslie entitled his little tract "A short method with the Deists," so, if you choose to adopt the course I shall point out, you may call it, "A short way with Christians," and I shall engage it will be effectual.

You will say, perhaps, that it is necessary, first, to destroy Christianity before you can introduce a better system. Ah! my friend, do not wait for that. Christianity is so long a dying, that you Deists will all die before you have a chance of establishing your own system. You may say of the Gospel, as the despairing husband of his litigious wife: "I am tired of getting the better before she is tired of losing the victory." Take no heed to it, but proceed at once, as if it were non-existent, to show the world "a more excellent way;" that dazzled world will then say of Deism, as compared with Christianity, what Paul says of

Christianity as compared with Judaism: "It hath no glory," being eclipsed by a "glory that excelleth."

But I must first, in another letter or two, lay before you briefly some of the *reasons* on which I would advise you to raise the siege of Christianity. I know that the attacking party often has some advantage over those who act on the defensive, but not always; and from the length and tediousness of this war, and various other reasons which I shall detail to you, I do not augur well for your success. A defensive war is not always so bad,—especially if the besieged occupy a Gibraltar, and the besiegers wooden fortresses and a fluctuating element; above all, if it comes to red-hot shot into the bargain. There is something invigorating, I grant, in assault; but none in knocking one's head against stone walls. Now, without implying anything (that I may not offend you,) as to the truth of Christianity, I think it may be shown that the assault in this case is of that description.

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

P. S.—You will perhaps think all the latter part of this letter mere *badinage*. I assure you I am most serious. Though *I* am convinced of the truth of Christianity, yet if it be false, I am as deeply anxious that it should be proved so, as you can be. I am persuaded (though I might be puzzled to give a reason for it in that case) that nothing but good can come out of Truth; and therefore, if she still be at the "bottom of the well," let me have the advantage of your (or of any man's) wheel and axle to get the jade out.

I am also deeply convinced that *if* Christianity be false, the best method for proving it so is that I shall hereafter point out.

## LETTER XCII.

TO THE SAME.

1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am led to regard the assault on Christianity as hopeless—because I see that it has been continued for so many generations in vain; and especially that its enemies have had, for more than a century, every opportunity of doing their worst,—that is, of *saying* their worst, and have achieved nothing.

Nor can I, on the calmest survey, perceive on what grounds you can promise yourself a chance of success.

You cannot say, as in other cases, “This religion sprang up in an unhistoric age, and among barbarous people.” On the contrary, it entered the world amidst the light of literature and civilization, and immediately began to propagate itself amongst the nations most renowned for both, as well as elsewhere. Christ appeared to the world, as he appeared to the apostle on his way to Damascus, with a “light from heaven” at “noonday.”

You cannot say, as in other cases, “This religion is received only by a particular race or nation, and cannot travel out of it; it is local, and like other similar religions, will die when political changes or military conquest shall try it.” On the contrary, it has been adopted by the most diverse races, by the most different nations, by Greeks, Romans, English, French, Germans,—by Barbarian and Civilized alike; by people distinguished by every conceivable variety of culture, laws, manners, climate; and it has been retained in spite of political and military revolutions of the most confounding nature; revolutions which have shivered into atoms a score of *other* religions.



It dwells in every zone—under every form of polity—its *habitat* would seem the bosom of humanity.

You cannot say that “it has been adopted only by vulgar intellects, and without investigation.” On the contrary, genius of the highest order among the most lettered and civilized of the nations, has, in ten thousand instances, calmly, after the fullest scrutiny, and with the deepest knowledge of the laws of evidence, declared the proofs of its truth unassailable. The books that the literature of a dozen nations has contributed to its *defence* would alone make an immense library!

You cannot say that “its enemies have had no liberty of pleading on the other side.” On the contrary, from the earliest times downwards, and especially during the last century and a half, antagonists have appeared in all the most polished Christian nations, with the fullest liberty of employing every weapon, whether of ridicule or of argument, against Christianity; they have written thousands of books, not one in a hundred of which is remembered twenty years after its publication, and have constructed half a dozen theories,—reciprocally contradictory, it must be admitted,—of accounting in a *natural* way for the origination of this troublesome religion. Some of the writers of such books,—as Gibbon and Voltaire, for example,—have on *other* grounds been of enormous popularity, and yet the position of Christianity remains much the same!

You cannot say “its enemies” have not a thousand times paraded the “discrepancies and contradictions” which you affirm exist in the Bible: for this they have been doing ever since the time of Porphyry and Celsus till now;—yet, mortifying to relate! without getting one in ten thousand to suppose that such discrepancies at all shake the historical authority of the Scriptures.

You cannot say that “The Book has not given you every

*advantage ;*” for never was there one which more irritates the pride and prejudices of mankind ; which presents greater obstacles to its reception, morally and intellectually ; — so that it is amongst the most unaccountable things to *me*, not that it should be rejected by some, but that it should be accepted by any. “It is, I grant,” said an old Deist, “a very strange thing that Christianity should be embraced; for *I* do not perceive in myself any inclination to receive the New Testament.” *There* spake, not Deism only, but HUMAN NATURE.

You cannot say, that like other religions, “Christianity panders to man’s passions or vices, or promises him a sensual paradise.” On the contrary, its morality is not *easy*, its heaven by no means attractive, and its hell — *very* disagreeable !

Similarly, you cannot say that intellectually, — especially for the last sceptical century or two, — it has not made your task, if it were feasible at all, as easy as possible ; for the *wonders* of the Old and New Testament, *if not true*, are the very wildest of fables and romances ; — they equal — so some of you say — those of Æsop, of the Iliad, the “Arabian Nights,” Ovid’s “Metamorphoses.” How mortifying, my friend, that you should have any difficulty in exploding such monstrous follies ! What if your greatest philosophers had in vain striven for twenty — nay, eighteen hundred years to show the world that Ovid’s “Metamorphoses” were not to be received as literal facts ! Now it *ought* to be as easy, if your theory be true, to convince people that Shadrach, Meschech, and Abednego never came safe out of the fiery furnace, and that the “swine” never ran off with the “devils,” or rather the “devils” never ran off with the “swine !” One of two things must be conceded ; either the pressure of historical proof, — the marks of nature and sincerity in the New Testament must be irresistible, thus

to prevent your success with those who, with you, reject all similar things in other cases as mere fables; or else, if these things *be* fables, as you assert,—the folly of these capricious folks,—enlightened on all else, dark as midnight here,—must be indomitable, and your attempts to enlighten them must be hopeless!

It is vain to say, “Oh! but there are millions of men who believe millions of other extravagant fables.” It is true; but I must once more remind you that the way to measure the difficulty of disabusing *Christians*, (and I fancy it will be a long time before your friends even attempt to disabuse anybody *except* Christians; they leave Hindoos very quietly to themselves,) is to imagine a number of races and nations, as different in origin, culture, and language, and as distant in space, as those which have adopted Christianity, all enamoured of the Vedas, say,—devoutly believing them—ready to die for them—writing endless books to prove all their fables true; men, among all these people, like Locke, Butler, Pascal, swearing, in the very focus of light and civilization, that the Vedas are all proved true, and accomplished sceptics among their very compatriots assailing them in vain! Now when you *do* find such a case, I should say what I say of your assaults on Christianity,—“You may as well leave the Vedas alone;” which, by the way, I dare say the Deist *will* do at any rate; for, it seems, mankind may believe anything in the world, for any pains *he* will take to enlighten them,—except Christianity!

I have just been reading a beautiful book now in course of publication, which has suggested some reflections showing still more strongly (as I conceive) the hopelessness of your enterprise. But I must reserve them for another sheet

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCIII.

TO THE SAME.

1832.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The book to which I referred in my last is Conybeare and Howson's beautiful work on the "Life and Epistles of Paul."

The Apostle Paul wrote, perhaps, nearly as much as would fill a volume of the "Traveller's Library," at least, if it were printed in a little larger type: or, to put the matter otherwise, his compositions would make no less than three or four columns of the "Times' Debates!" — surely a voluminous author.

Yet he has had more thought, time, toil, and ingenuity, expended on him, — in the investigation of his history, and of the times in which he is *supposed* to have lived, — in the correction of his text, — in the criticism of his style, — in the illustration of his beauties — in the elucidation of his difficulties — than Plato, Aristotle, and Bacon, Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Shakspeare, all put together, voluminous and zealous as criticism on each of these authors has been.

Now, I know just what you will say: "that when an author has so much written upon him and about him, it is an argument rather of his worthlessness than of his worth; that, if his meaning were quite plain, and his merits unambiguous, he might dispense with commentators." Very good; but then be pleased to observe the consequence; it will follow that St. Paul being the very worst, the writers just mentioned must be the *next* worst of the tribe; for perhaps after him — though all at a distance immeasurable — the great writers I have named have most attracted the attention and stimulated the zeal of critics. And, further,

in bar of any such brief solution of the paradox, it may be said that though the most worthless of writers may *need* most commentary, somehow they do not get it; mankind go a shorter way to work with them, by quietly suffering them to sink to the bottom. It will be long before Blackmore will enlist a Warburton or Malone in his service, or a Muggleton find a commentator in a Locke! Least of all do men of widely different countries and races thus expend their energies, and, worse still, their money, in everlastingly translating and elucidating dull common-place or obscure nonsense.

Now, here is St. Paul in more languages than all the best classic authors put together; and scores of writers in all the more cultivated modern tongues,—that is, among all the most civilized nations,—have been poring over the Apostle, and commenting upon him, without end. The tractates and treatises on separate texts,—on single chapters,—on single epistles,—on parts of them,—on the whole collectively;—the commentaries on his life, character, and history, and on the churches he is *supposed* to have founded: these writings, I say, gathered from all the languages of Europe, would constitute an immense library! An immense library spun out of a few tracts, which would have hardly made as much as a single play of Shakspeare or one of the longer of Plato's Dialogues! tracts which, however, exist in twenty times as many languages as any production of these authors can be found in. Whatever may have been the case with his Corinthian converts, the Apostle may certainly *now* say of all mankind—"that he speaks with more tongues than they all!"

Such a contrast between his scanty authorship, and his prodigious and enduring popularity—popularity which the most gigantic and aspiring genius may well look at with despairing envy—is certainly a curious phenomenon.

These reflections have been forced upon me by Conybeare and Howson's splendid volumes. Two portly quartos! While every other author is shrinking into duodecimos, Paul can still afford to come out in quarto, illustrated by all that the printer's and engraver's arts can do for him — accompanied by a large apparatus of maps and plates and plans, and with profuse impressions of gems and coins and statues, and medals, and inscriptions. One author, I see, has expended a whole volume — think of that! — on the single episode of Paul's last voyage to Rome, — while the press teems with ever new works of critics and commentators on this curious tract-writer.

Now, on the supposition, which, for your sake, I of course take for granted, that the Apostle Paul was as little under the influence of preternatural inspiration as any other man, all this portentous absurdity of mankind is at least very perplexing and unaccountable. "Not at all," I imagine I hear you say. "It proves only the infinite folly of man, and the slowness and difficulty with which Truth gains admission to his mind." Very true; if your theory be right, it proves that, sure enough; but, as I think, something more; even something like the *impossibility* of your disabusing the world by any direct means; for if, at this time of day, in the most enlightened nations of Europe, — at an infinite remove, in point of race, customs, laws, education, from every thing that can create sympathy with the Jewish *fanatic*, — in the midst of learning, knowledge, art, and science, you find men, and among them many of the most acute and comprehensive intellects, the most capable of judging of evidence, still spell-bound by this desperate delusion, how can you hope that it will be ever dissipated?

You will hardly say, I think, that it is only just now that the pretensions of Paul have been disputed.

If you do, I beg to remind you that Herbert and Bolingbroke, and Chubb, and Tindal, and Collins, and a host of Deists, derided and proscribed both Paul and his readers, for a whole century together; and what was done in our own country was also doing in Holland, Germany, and France. Nothing can be more contemptible, in the estimate of a number of Deists in all these countries for a century past, than the "besotted admiration" of the writings of Paul and of Paul himself. Yet the tide of love and veneration still flows on; readers and writers go on poring over his alleged "impertinences and extravagances," just as if the great Deistical oracles had never spoken. Indeed, they might as well never have spoken, for no one, (unless it be one in a generation or so, very curious in the history of opinion,) ever deigns to look into them. If Bolingbroke, who declares St. Paul "a vain-glorious boaster," guilty of "great hypocrisy and dissimulation," "obscure and unintelligible," and where not so, "profane, absurd, and trifling," could rise from the dead, how would he be mortified to find how little he had affected the conclusions of the world! How vexed to think that while his own volumes are covered with dust and cobwebs, St. Paul speaks some scores of languages more than when Bolingbroke "spat" on his "Jewish gaberdine," and that a few thousand more volumes have been admiringly written about him than existed then!

You recollect, no doubt, the amusing dream of Geoffrey Crayon in the Library at Westminster Abbey;—how he fancied the books beginning to talk, and one little squab quarto, long buried and forgotten, after rustling its leaves and looking big, asking in a husky voice whether one "Will Shakspeare—a vulgar fellow and vagabond deerstealer, who enjoyed an unaccountable reputation in his time, was still remembered?" He presumes he "soon sank into ob-

livion." Lord Bolingbroke might represent that little fat forgotten quarto: but even the popularity of Shakspeare faintly shadows that enjoyed by the Jewish tent-maker.

"Well," perhaps you will say, "and what of all this? I suppose you will next infer that an author whose 'opera omnia' are a few little tracts,—and those too (as many say) so worthless, so crammed with extravagance, nonsense, and obscurities,—must have been *inspired*, because he has, in spite of all this, exerted such a prolonged and intense influence on the world." By no means, I mention the fact, indeed, as very curious and inexplicable; but I have no intention of travelling beyond *your* hypothesis in the application of it. On the supposition that Paul was *not* inspired, one of two things is, I think, abundantly plain; either he must have been so prodigiously clever that men will never escape the toils in which he has caught them; or they are such fools that you cannot hope to deliver them. On the latter alternative, you may declaim as much as you will against the infinite folly of man; but then, I think, the corollary is the extreme difficulty, not to say impossibility, of your ever directly counter-working this delusion! Pray make much of it; let it even be a melancholy solace to the Deist,—who, after so long a time and so much labor, has done so little in that enterprise to which he has committed himself. He has in truth much "need of patience;" he must wait in all probability for many weary ages before this curious insanity of mankind will become extinct.

The Deist should at least, carefully abstain from insisting that the Apostle Paul has nothing or little *in* him,—because that only makes matters worse; the delusion is all the greater and the more hopeless of cure; he ought rather to insist that the Apostle's grandeur and sublimity of character and sentiment,—his eloquence and genius,



his magnanimity and virtue, his benevolence and his pathos,—were inconceivably great, and thus it is that he has inveigled the world into its superstitious homage. On second thoughts, however, it is dangerous to give the Deist advice on this point; for it is attended with difficulties. It is a delicate topic looked at in any light; for *if* Paul was such a man, however it may appear to account for the besotted reverence for the Apostle felt by the world, it greatly aggravates every difficulty when we come to consider how a man thus admirably endowed came to be *either* so knavish, *or* so cracked; so knavish if he propagated, without believing, that false system of doctrines by which he has deluded men; so cracked, if he propagated *because* he believed it! If, on the other hand, he be the profane, absurd, and trivial writer Bolingbroke makes him out, it proves that mankind in general—amongst them multitudes even of the highest genius—must be such fools in having been befooled by such a fool, that you cannot hope they will ever be wiser! I know what you will say: “Millions upon millions of men have believed other false systems of religion.” I grant it: but what you have got to show is some such thing as this; millions upon millions of men, of the most diverse races and ages, and amongst them men of the acutest intellect and the most liberal culture,—English, Scotch, French, Germans, Dutch,—including men like Bacon, Newton, Locke, Butler, Leibnitz,—madly bent on believing, expounding, embracing, and if necessary dying for, some such books as the Vedas or the Koran! Take my advice,—leave Christianity alone, and steer on a different tack.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCIV.

TO THE SAME.

1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Before I proceed to my promised counsels, let me offer a remark or two on your recent letter. You say, as if it afforded you hope, that, after all, the great mass of Christians know but little of the "Evidences of Christianity," and are incapable of entering into them. I must show you that this affords, and can afford, you no hope of success; rather the contrary, considering that *what* they are thus content to believe with, it seems, so little knowledge of the *why*, goes, as I have remarked, desperately against the grain of human nature!

But further; what you insist on does not affect the fact that many of the most comprehensive minds have deliberately examined the "Evidences," and their authority naturally weighs with men in general who have not; indeed these men are as impregnably intrenched in *their* reasons for belief, as they would be if they were as learned as Paley or Lardner himself. They may not be always able to analyze their convictions — their logic may want a voice — but if they could speak their feelings, each would say something like this: "You taunt me with yielding much to authority — well, to some extent I must, by your own argument, do so in relation either to *you* or those who oppose you? And why should I defer to you rather than your opponents? — To one or other, by your own showing, I *must* defer. You tell me that I am unable to enter into the Historic Evidences for Christianity with any success, or with any pretensions to give an independent opinion on the subject. I confess it, and for the same reasons I am unable to pronounce on the validity of your arguments against it; just

as I am *also* unable to pronounce on any one of those metaphysical riddles which are involved in the systems which you present to me for my choice — your half-dozen theories of Deism; as, for example, whether it be true, as some say, that I am immortal, or, as others say, that I am not; whether there be a Providence that takes cognizance of all my actions, or no such thing. On a score of such questions my natural light does not enable me to pronounce so as to justify me in wrangling with you about them. On all such points, I am just as impotent to form an independent opinion as on the evidences of Christianity — though I have some shrewd guesses about the *contradictions* among your theories. I am a plain man; I have no more time or ability to enter into these subtleties, than into the deep critical questions which you say are involved in the investigation of the Truth of the Gospel. I confess that one of my chief arguments, though not the only one, *is* drawn from authority; from what *they* say who have, as I believe, gone thoroughly into all these matters; and I am puzzled to know why I should rather believe you when you tell me that the Gospel is false than them when they tell me it is true. I cannot conceive that the original authors of Christianity had any motives to deceive the world, and as little why these defenders of it should deceive me. As to *knowledge* and *character*, I cannot, for the life of me, say that Bolingbroke is worthier of my attention than Butler; Tom Paine than Paley; Voltaire than Pascal; Hobbes than Locke. But pray don't suppose that Authority is my only or chief reason for belief. No, I believe because I cannot *help* it: as I read the Gospels and the Epistles, in spite of many things nature does not like, I can't *help* believing them true. They are so stamped with honesty and guileless simplicity — with such an inimitable air of truth, that if they lie, Nature herself has lied, and deceived I must be.

As I read Paul, as I see his candor, his pathos, his magnanimity, his noble charity, his loving, burning, earnest words, I cannot but believe what he says. Nor is that all; — I feel that the doctrines are so beyond human invention, and so unlikely to be invented, if not beyond it — the morality so pure and elevated — the appeals to my spiritual consciousness so profound, — that I cannot believe the Gospel false. Nor is that all — myriads of us will cry, and it is the most resistless argument of all, “You may talk on for ever, but we have seen, have *felt*, the transforming power of Christianity — ‘We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.’”

For the reasons detailed in the last few letters, I, for one, fully believe that the assault on Christianity will be lost time. What I think you ought to do, I will now show you. As to Christianity, leave it alone, to do its worst or its best.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCV.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

And now, leaving Christianity to its own devices, let us consider the system of religious truth which you say commends itself to your reason at present; I will, then, give you my promised hints for securing its currency in the world.

You tell me that you are no longer satisfied that Christianity is a preternatural and authoritative revelation; — rather, that you suspect the contrary, though you frankly own dissatisfaction with the theories hitherto struck out, to account, by ordinary causes for its origin, characteristics,

and success. You say, at the same time, that you are deeply impressed with the value and importance of "Religion," as the "highest style of man;" more than ever convinced of the great truths of "Natural Religion" (as it is called), and that they *ought* to exercise a deep practical influence over the life; that of such truths you account these the chief: — the existence of a Supreme Being, Infinite in all perfections; the necessity and duty of every rational creature's knowing, loving, obeying, and worshipping Him; the immediate access of every soul of man, without any "figment of mediation," at all times to Him; the certainty of His forgiveness of any and of all offences against either Himself, the supreme Lawgiver, or any of our fellow-subjects, on confession and repentance, and, when possible, restitution; and the probability (in your opinion, certainty) of a future life, to give these truths effect. In brief, you tell me that these truths, — not to be received simply into the understanding as a mere creed, but to be practical over the whole life of man, as habitual principles of action, — constitute the sum of any rational religious system. Now this system is, in effect, (as you confess,) identical with that of Lord Herbert, — given to the world two centuries and more ago. You seem also to think, with him, that these principles are the undoubted dictates of man's religious nature — "innate" in Lord Herbert's vocabulary, intuitional in yours; and if not uttered *prior* to all instruction, yet universally developed, as the mind itself develops, under the action of the ordinary stimulants of the religious faculty, and needing no special Divine intervention either to elicit them or to give them authority; that these principles, the various religious systems which have prevailed in the world, have more or less distinctly recognized, and have contributed to extricate more or less successfully. You further think that Christianity was the most effectual attempt, till then made, at

the *complete* extrication of these truths; that it may have been a "necessary stage" in the transition from the more imperfect forms of religion, but that now it is necessary no longer; that the beautiful structure of a "rational" religion, being happily complete, the scaffolding may be thrown down! This seems, in brief, to be your view.

And so, I suppose, the little flower-pot of the Gospel, and all the other little flower pots of other religions, in which the oak-seedling was planted, being but crockery ware, have yielded to the expansive power of the Divine vegetation, have been shivered to pieces, and may now be thrown away; that as the "law" is said by the "imaginative" Paul to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, so Christianity was a schoolmaster to bring us to Lord Herbert! — though how it should need Lord Herbert, or anybody else, to teach any man truths which every man intuitively knows, passes my comprehension; or, if any such teacher is needed, whether may we not need a better?

How many questions might I ask, naturally suggested by such a theory! I might ask you how it came to pass that truths, which *you* say are the natural dictates of the human mind, came to be so slowly extricated, and to be even now, by the majority of mankind, so obscurely apprehended; I might ask you how so many of them came to be, and still are, so constantly disputed, doubted, denied, perverted; I might ask how it was that the infinitely different and grotesque systems of religion which have prevailed in the world, *being themselves the product of man's religious nature*, have exhibited, instead of a bright reflection and image of these "intuitional truths," the grossest caricature of them. I might ask you how it is that those "historical" and "traditional" religions, to which you so conveniently attribute man's tardy recognition of these truths, *could* ever have originated on such a theory as yours; since the said reli-

gions, pernicious as they may be, are nothing external to man; *they are his own work*; he has created — he has wrought them; though, on your theory, the glorious intuitions of which you speak, and which, amid the infinite load of lies and fables, are native still to the human heart, must have stared him in the face the while! I might ask you how it is, that even in the best of these fabrications, — as the religion of Moses and the religion of Christ, — man has exhibited so great a knack of corrupting rather than of improving them, so that Judaism became buried in Rabbinism, and Christianity in Popery. I might ask you how it is that, when these truths were presented to him, he has not been able even to conserve them, but has deliberately stifled them in a mass of ridiculous fables and superstitions, for which he is not only willing to vouch, but to die? I might ask you how it was that the abuses of “historical religion” began, — that those pernicious customs and practices were sanctioned, by the intervention of which you account for the dimming of man’s internal light? — how he came to *originate* them? If, as some of your wise men of Gotham say, man began upon all fours, as the very lowest savage, and gradually improved himself into a very gross idolater, — I might ask, in that case, how his internal light could well have been *dimmed*, and how I am to reconcile the fact with the universal possession of your intuitional truths which need no revelation? or whether, if we had seen the aboriginal savage moping and mowing, and adoring his new-created Deity in the form of a bright stone or a cockle shell — we could imagine him to be illuminated with your internal light? I might ask, if he was so illuminated, how it was that his spiritual faculty did not prevent him from thus playing the fool? — though, perhaps it may be said that the unutterable debasement in which he was created, — how the Divine benevolence is to be acquitted is quite another

question, — fairly put his “intuitions” to flight, as indeed such a night of tempest as that in which he is supposed to have been born might well have extinguished even a brighter flame than that of his little flickering lamp! If this theory be rejected, (as I think *you* will not accept it,) then I might ask how it was that man’s originally bright intuitional candle came to burn dim and to want snuffing? How it was that coming fresh from his Creator’s hand and just fitted up with his spiritual apparatus, he did not, however slowly, develop in the order of his faculties, but brutishly turned a deaf ear to them, and fell, — and still falls, under the dominion of lie and fable; — that the first act of this perverse dolt should be to kneel down to stocks and stones; — that he should be, in such infinite ways, and for such weary ages, such a fool and madman? And lastly, I might surely ask how it is that when “in these last days,” the Truth which is so perfectly “congruous,” is at length extricated, perverse man is so reluctant to receive it that, since Lord Herbert’s days, those who have acquiesced in his theory may be reckoned by units, and those who have doubted or rejected it in favor of historical religions, or none, by millions; or how it is that amongst those who have, with him and you, rejected Christianity, scarcely half a dozen together receive this system, — which is so perfectly “congruous to man’s nature,” — but dispute about it eternally; about the existence of God Himself; about His unity and personality; His nature and perfections; about the relations of man to Him; about man’s responsibility, destinies, immortality: I might ask . . . but there is no end to the questions that might be asked; and as I fear there would be little chance of getting an answer, I will ask none of them.

To content yourself with affirming that you intuitively know all the truths you make the sum of your theology, that they are all *self-evident*, would be, in the face of the



entire religious history of man — of the inconceivably tardy process by which your little system has been developed, — the infinitesimal part of mankind that has yet been brought to acquiesce in it, — the infinite disputes about its parts among the few who do, — something perfectly preposterous. I conceive, therefore, you cannot be too grateful to me for waiving all the above questions.

Neither will it suffice to tell me that some questions of similar nature can be addressed to me respecting Christianity; I answer, Not so. You may say, That too has been tardily embraced, — has been disputed about, — has been corrupted. I answer, Yes; and naturally, for it proceeds upon just the contrary hypothesis to yours; it assumes that man was incapable of adequately extricating religious truth — that he was “wandering from the way,” and needed to be set right; that he was corrupt, and required to be reformed; that he “loved darkness rather than light,” and therefore recoiled from the light. All this is *natural* on the hypothesis of Christianity. But the questions I ask of you are unanswerable on yours.”

You must not, therefore, be surprised when you speak so confidently of your religious system, that men should ask you many such troublesome questions as I have indicated.

But from me fear nothing. I will act on the compact I have made with you, and shall not trouble you with controversy. Neither shall I even taunt you with the inconceivable difficulty with which man seems to be got to embrace any such system as yours. I shall charitably suppose that some mysterious obstacles have hitherto stood in the way of man’s “natural reception” of perfectly “natural truth” when propounded to him; — though I confess it seems to me, on your theory, as wonderful as that a hungry man should refuse bread, or a thirsty man water. However, I *will* suppose, for your benefit and that of the world,

that now, at least, the truth has been fully developed, and that it is destined to go on, as you say, "conquering and to conquer." The next thing is to ask, how it shall be made triumphant? *My* notions of what will need be done I will give you in another letter or two.

Yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCVI.

TO THE SAME.

1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You cannot but see, I think, the immense advantage which the dominant religions of the earth, as Mahometanism, Hindooism, Christianity, have enjoyed from the possession of "Books," — the Koran, the Vedas, the Bible, — in which their doctrines are not only solemnly and permanently recorded, but embodied in forms more or less fitted to impress the fancy and excite emotion. The first suggestion, therefore, which I would offer to you and your co-religionists is just to compile a "Bible" of your own; a book that shall exactly mirror, neither more nor less, the religious truth which, as some of you say, is intuitively known to each man, and which the rest of you admit is, at all events, instantly recognized on presentation to the mind. If the former theory be true, you may think you ought to be exempted from any such task, as a work of supererogation. That conclusion, however, would be rash and unwise; since we see, in fact, the use of external instruments in the disengagement even of our most elementary cognitions; and certainly in all cases, the value of such aid in making Truth more vivid, — in giving

it the empire of association and imagination, — is obvious enough. This we see illustrated in the history of systems of religious *error*, as you deem them; and of religious *truth*, as I deem Christianity; these systems retain their hold in a very great measure from the possession of Sacred Books; and you, if you do not wish to work at a disadvantage, will also condescend to compile *your* Bible.

And I need hardly say that if the objections of your confraternity be well founded; — if our Bible be characterized by the exceeding want of symmetry, and just development, and system which you attribute to it; if it be so egregiously disfigured by mutilated truth, positive error, foolish and lying legends, puerile and superstitious matter, — you will have a prodigious advantage over it; you may even learn from its very errors. What accuracy of statement, what elevation of sentiment, what ethical purity, what philosophic justness, may we not expect in your new Organum of Religious Truth!

You will say, perhaps, "But the difficulty will be to obtain *unanimity* amongst us. We are not less divided, — and on far more important points, — than the Christians themselves."

If I were not aware of it, I should certainly with unfeigned wonder receive the news, and even deny its possibility, considering that your *theory* proclaims religious truth to be but the reflection and echo of the intuitions of universal humanity! But as I *do* know it, — as I know, from intimate acquaintance with the whole series of your principal writers, — some of whom say that man is immortal — some that he is not; some that if he be so, there is no sufficient proof of it; some that there is a *special* Providence — some that there is none; some that worship is required, some that it is not; some that prayer is a duty, and some that it is even an absurdity; some that actions

are prohibited which others believe innocent; some that universal annihilation awaits man at death and some, universal happiness;—as I say I *do* know all this, I shall express no surprise; nor shall I taunt you with it, for be the taunt ever so just, it can afford you no help,—which I am so anxious to proffer—to do so. Nor has it, in truth, any bearing on the present topic; inasmuch as such diversity does not diminish the necessity of the method it will be your wisdom to adopt. You must surely have *some*—be they many or few,—who sympathize sufficiently with your views of what are “the universal intuitions of humanity,” to enable them to act in unison; or are you, indeed, my dear friend, in solitary possession of the only exact transcript of our “universal intuitions?” But even if this were the case there would be no help for it; even then you must go forth,—a knight-errant of spiritual chivalry,—alone; but take a few with you, if you can.

Only remember, that whether you can or not, your system, if you really wish to supplant Christianity, and establish another and better system in its place, must be exhibited in dazzling light beside the New Testament, and compel mankind to feel how great the superiority!

And by the way, I would just hint, that though perhaps not absolutely necessary to the Deist’s “Bible,” it would be eminently desirable (if possible) to give some conjectures, not perhaps more certain, but at least more plausible, than your writers have generally given, as to the origin and original condition of man;—such as shall quite throw into the shade, by comparison, the Scripture account of man’s primeval rectitude, temptation, and fall. Men feel an intense interest in this problem from the *present evil condition of the world*; and I assure you they don’t like the “primeval savage” theory at all. That

man came from his gracious Creator's own hand in the guise of something much worse than an Australasian or Hottentot; crawled, grubbed, gibbered, and jabbered for nobody knows how long, till by slow degrees he *improved* himself into an ordinary savage, kindled a fire, boiled his acorns, consecrated a sacred monkey for his God, and found that he *could* utter other sounds than "Yah Yah," — this theory, I say, gives such a repellent view, not only of your aboriginal man, — but of the God that so fashioned him, and expressly *for* such a most miserable destiny, that mankind will never away with it; no, not even if it were shown, (though both speculation and fact confute it,) that utter savages could develope themselves into civilized creatures without external teaching! Most desirable is it to renounce this theory, and give a more plausible account of man's original condition (as a key to his present) than Deism has hitherto given. If you *could* also settle that little matter, (unhappily so questioned among you,) of "man's immortality," it would be as well. But this by the way; and I proceed to other and more necessary characteristics of your Bible.

You should, at all events, establish such a comprehensive, perspicuous, just system of religious and ethical truth, — of the "intuitions of universal humanity," — and so arranged and expressed, as at once to eclipse that of the New Testament; — which, if your representations of the New Testament be true, *must*, as I say, be the easiest of all tasks. But further; considering the influence of fancy, association, and the very forms of expression in giving vividness and power to man's conceptions of Truth, I think your Bible should exhibit it in forms at least as attractive as those of the New Testament; adapted alike to the highest and the lowest intellects, and capable of ready transfusion into all languages.

Again; considering the notorious influence which a certain vivid embodiment of a *Moral Ideal*, exhibited in dramatic action, has exerted, I think it would be well that *you* should also exhibit such an ideal;—such a delineation as would at once arrest and fascinate the gaze of humanity more perfectly than the One Only Portrait which so many have hitherto pronounced inimitable and divine. I admit, indeed, that in consequence of the *traditional* veneration which the world already entertains for that picture, *your* ideal may for a while labor under some disadvantage; but surely, as so many of your writers have insisted that there are manifold and manifest blemishes in the earlier one, and have even thought that, after all, it is by no means a perfect, indeed a very defective, representation of absolute virtue and moral loveliness, you can, by rectifying the errors and presenting a still more faultless picture, counterpoise this adventitious advantage. I am so charmed with the idea, that I am quite impatient to see the thing done!

It will be a foolish modesty of you, — cultivated and able men as you are, — to whom all literature is open, and with such a model to improve upon, to decline this task; — nay, it will be ridiculous, considering what Galilean Jews, in your estimation grossly ignorant, have done unaided; and more than once — nay, four several times. To be beaten by *them* — think of the shame of it! I cannot for a moment imagine that you will have the slightest difficulty in the matter, — *if your theory of the origin of the Gospel be true!*

There is one thing, however, I would earnestly caution you against; do not let your imaginative forms be so *exquisite* as to make mankind take them, as they have done the “mythical or fictitious element” in the New Testament (your theory supposes it *is* legendary or ficti-

tious,) for genuine history; do not, I warn you, so transcend Homer and Shakspeare (for even their creations were never in danger of being so misinterpreted,) as to make people fancy your fable, fact; or else, not only will you fail of your object, but will have added unexpectedly another to the many *historical* religions. On remarking to our friend S——, the other day, that this would be a necessary result of any such fatal mistake, he said, laughing, that he thought there was not much fear of it, and that my caution was superfluous. “Still,” said I, “since the thing *has* been done (intentionally or not) according to the theory of these reformers, it seems but wise and kind to put them on their guard. It would be mortifying to have the world deluded a second time.”

These charms of the imaginative element I think it the more important to insist upon, because, as you are aware, Deism has been hitherto at such cruel disadvantage, from the absence of them. Such dreary, pithless, marrowless, old speculators as the elder Deists have seldom been seen; to look through their systems of “natural religion” is like looking at a *hortus siccus*; through the dry crackling leaves no vital succulent juices circulate. On the other hand, the semblance of “spiritual sentiment and unction” which characterizes the modern Deistical school is such shiftless, hopeless plagiarism from the Bible, that it all reads like imitation. Their books are like a Chinese pagoda stuck over with crosses and saints stolen from a Christian cathedral.

You can hardly imagine—I find it very difficult to do so myself—what an effect even a poem like Milton’s “Paradise Lost,” or a book like Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress,” if conceived and executed on Deistical principles, would have, though felt to be only works of imagination. May we not hope for *such* things at least?

Will you be beaten not only by “fishermen,” but by “tinkers?”

Under what advantages, on the whole, would you construct your system! universally appealing to nothing less than “intuitions!” philosophically just in method,—adorned by all the lights and beauties of imagination, and relieved from all the errors and absurdities which crowd the New Testament! You would have no adventitious authority, indeed, but then that is precisely what you do not want, and renounce; it would be Truth herself—merely suitably arrayed. Who could fail to be enamoured with her charms?

As Mahomet reminded his followers that the *style* alone of the Koran was enough to prove it divine—so the *substance* of your Koran would be a yet more conclusive argument;—not inspired, indeed, in the vulgar sense—but at once recognized, according to your theory, to be the full, fair reflection, the clear echo of the “universal intuitions of humanity.”

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

P. S.—If you *could* also get a few of your poetical friends to give us a trifle or two of Deistical “Hymnology,” it might be as well. You see how varied and pathetic are the devotional strains to which the Psalter of the Hebrew Poet-King has given rise. How *is* it that your whole Deistical literature is so utterly powerless over the imagination and the heart? I long to see a new “Psalter” from some poetic Tindal or Collins.



## LETTER XC VII.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I deem it, next, of much moment, if you would *deistically evangelize* the world, that you should find some method of organizing yourselves into social unities ; this is absolutely necessary if you would accomplish any object in common, or, in such a chilly climate as yours, keep your sympathies for one another from freezing. The world, at present, does not believe in your capacity to listen on social human nature, or to give effect to your hopes of diffusing the blessings of a "rational piety." Deism is looked on as a negative, not a positive thing,—an explosive and destructive, not a centripetal or an organizing force. It is precisely here that in all its forms it has hitherto so ignominiously failed ; nevertheless till its advocates cease to live in such dreary isolation as scattered units,—till it can bind together its human atoms, and give them compact shape and coherence,—till it can breathe into men a spark of enthusiasm, and inflame and intensify emotion by inspiring a common sympathy in common objects, it will never be a thing of influence at all ; how much less an instrument of regenerating the world !

A few trifling and partial achievements, here and there, of the destructive kind,—the cutting off now and then a straggler who has strayed from the camp of "historical religions"—that is all it must expect to accomplish, till it relieves itself from the old and just reproach of being incapable of inspiring common sympathies and prompting to united action.

How happy the change if you succeed in organizing your deistical friends ! Soon shall we see numerous "Churches,"

—I beg pardon, “Temples” I mean,—rising in our land; crowded to hear the new and true εὐαγγέλιον, by which the old fashioned Gospel is to be supplanted and eclipsed! No doubt they will be in a plain yet majestic style of architecture,—befitting the mingled grandeur and simplicity of the new institute; adorned with everything in their structure and style which can minister to austere beauty. As to the funds,—who can hesitate to believe they will be easily supplied by that lavish benevolence which a system so pure and glorious cannot fail to excite?

It were a scandal to doubt it. If even the poorest and meanest superstition of the ancient or the modern world; if Christianity, in its most corrupt forms as well as in its purest, can induce their votaries, according to their means, and “beyond them,” to cover the world with the structures and the apparatus of religious worship, what may we not hope from that more perfect theory of religion with which you and your compeers are about to bless the nations? A beginning should, I think, be made without delay. Let some edifice, capable of holding at least three or four score (that, for a time, may be quite enough,) be built as a model “Fane” of your true deistical worship.

I am perfectly aware, of course, of the arguments by which such an attempt at organization may be met. But I cannot admit that, if the great achievements you hope for are ever to be realized, those objections are to be listened to. You must move, if you would be successful; and remember for your encouragement, that scarcely more than a hundred Christians met in a certain “upper room” at Jerusalem some 1800 years ago!

It may be said (and I concede the force of the argument) that it is impossible to make a formidable organization out of a few score of people, appearing, sporadically, in the course of a century or so. I cannot deny the mournful

truth of the statement ; but since you must make a beginning, you must not lay any stress on this fact. You must use the elements you have, such as they are,—many or few. The tardy growth, or rather stunted *no growth* of Deism, the paucity of the proselytes it has been capable of making during three centuries, tempts Christians to taunt it as a thing of nought. Ought you not to infer, with *your* views of its self-recommending excellence, that its want of success springs from the absence of that positive effort and positive machinery, for the necessity of which I plead? If you doubt, that when exhibited and enforced as it ought to be, it would commend itself to the human heart,—slowly, perhaps, but surely,—you not only give sorry proof of your faith in the doctrine of “Progress,” but will even lead people to suspect that *your* truth is not so “congruous” to the human soul after all ; and that the doleful representations of Christians as to the “depravity of human nature,” are too well founded.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCVIII.

TO THE SAME.

1832.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Many other suggestions I could offer, but I will content myself with one more. Could you not manage, then, to get up, among your Deistical friends, a little missionary “steam,” and make a trip or two to the heathen? It does seem strange to all Christendom that the infinite forms of error and pollution, in which the nations are wallowing, should always have been viewed by your Deistical friends *with such* profound apathy ; that not the slightest effort

should have been made on your part to diffuse among miserable Polytheists the only pure system; that you should have had no sacred ambition to become reformers and benefactors of the world! If it be said, "We have enough to do to convert Christians" — that is true; more than enough, I should say; but then, you perceive, Christians *won't* be converted; and so, having preached the truth to these obstinate folks, faithfully, but without effect, you, like the Apostle Paul in relation to the Jews, are absolved from further effort, and should "turn to the Gentiles." Why should *they* be deprived of the benefit of the universal religion you have to preach, because these Jew-like Christians will not hear it? If it be said, though I fancy *you* will not say, — "The heathen are very well, — Hindoos and Caffres, — with their idols and absurdities, let them alone," — the same argument surely will do for *Christians*; let them alone; if a Polynesian is well off with his gross superstitions, surely a Christian must be better off, — at least as well. Why so anxious to subvert Christianity? On this account, therefore, as well as for the other reasons I have mentioned, leave it alone.

If you say, "Why, the fact is, the *mission* of Deism is simply destructive; burning down, not building houses, is our vocation — and that is easiest done in the next street; — why should we go to other lands when we can fling our torches into our neighbors' doors and windows?" — this, if true, is surrendering the whole question. It is confirming the world in its impression that your system was never destined to be a "*power*" in the world; while, as I have shown you in previous letters, even your destructive efforts somehow do not succeed; the incendiary match is always going out — the Deistical gunpowder is always damp.

Can it be imagined that you will have much difficulty in obtaining *funds* for a moderate Missionary experiment,

considering the importance of the object? Many, I know, are disposed to think it. Prove them in the wrong. It is true one sometimes hears the philanthropic Deist making light of any such *vulgar* modes of manifesting spiritual activity. "That activity is not to be measured," it is sublimely said, "by any such base estimate. Let the vulgar lay stress on Bible and Missionary societies, and the other coarse machinery of an ordinary Christian philanthropy, if they will, and parade in Reports, and Platform rhodomontade, the *money* which they have wheedled out of the pockets of the people; but a pure lover of 'spiritual truth' will appraise at the true value such odious modes of promoting its diffusion." This is all very fine, but it will not avail you; odious as may be the machinery of Christian zeal — vile as may be the talk about "money," and the appeals for it,—still, as long as it is true that the things in question cannot be done *without* money, (as nothing indeed can be done without cost, and the said money is but a part of it,) — money must be had, and you must be content to remain insignificant if you cannot obtain it.

In the next place, "vulgar" as money may be, it is, and is generally taken to be, a tolerably just index of the sincerity and strong convictions of those who give it: of the sacrifices they are willing to make for any object, if they cannot make them in the form of personal effort. Men are generally supposed, (I imagine not erroneously,) to love their money as well as most things; their hankering for that which represents the value of all things besides, is at least as strong as that for any of the things it represents. And so, when it is freely given, men will continue to think that the love of that *for* which it is given is very sincere, and the sense of its value very strong; and when it is *not* given, or given grudgingly, men will take it as a proof — a very vulgar one, it may be, *but still a proof* — that those who thus grudge it do *not*

care about the things they profess to admire and love, and are not solicitous that they should be victorious in the world.

Now, if Christians can under the prompting of their *low* system — low as compared with *yours* — voluntarily expend year by year, so much of their gains on the propagation of the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth, it can be no difficult thing for you, and those who think with you, to subscribe a few thousands at least for the commencement of a similar hopeful experiment. Surely the system in which are so deeply involved the fortunes of humanity is worth thus much! If not, it must be accounted one of those machines which are admirable in model, but which will not *work*.

And here I would humbly suggest, that a method *might* perhaps be devised of bringing into the enterprise a number of those who do not quite agree, or are even very far from agreeing, with you. You know Christians are often praised for uniting in a common cause by merging their minor differences (would to God they did it more frequently!); now how easily could many of your friends do the like; some of whom deem all the differences of all the religions of the world *minor* differences, and hold that the “absolute religion” is latent in them all! What differences might *they* not consider minor who think Hindooism and Mahometanism tolerable! And what a delightful exhibition of charity would it be to find Mr. D—— declaring that, as Christians all agreed in subscribing to the Bible Society, though they were not quite unanimous in the interpretation of the Bible, so he was willing to support the great “Parent Deism-Propagation Society,” and cheerfully waive his opinions on the trivial points of a future life, and the immortality of the soul, in which he did not coincide with his “brethren”! Mr. T——, humbly hoping that he should never allow his

heart to be divided from his co-religionists by such a dubious thing as the doctrine of man's responsibility, of which he had strong doubts! Mr. W——, nobly giving to the winds his peculiar sentiments on the subject of a special Providence; and Mr. P——, in a similar strain, saying that, though he thinks all men will be saved at last, yet, conscious of the noble projects of his benevolent friends for the amelioration of the human race, he will cheerfully contribute his annual guinea as a homage to the spirit of Deistical philanthropy! "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Nay,—I am by no means sure, if you cordially set to work on such a magnanimous project, — carefully and honestly excluding the Bible, — that you might not easily get a portion of your funds from *Christians themselves*. They are so provokingly convinced of *their* power and of *your* impotence, that I verily believe they would absolutely rejoice in what they would regard as a valuable *negative experiment*, and would be quite willing to give you the money, if you will but find the system and the men! I am myself so far a sharer in their confidence, or impudence, whichever you may please to consider it, that if you will but make the experiment, (promising to steer clear of all that is *characteristic* of Christianity, and confining yourselves to such a system as that of Lord Herbert,) I will, if you can but get the men, promise you my annual guinea for at least ten years to come.

Now if, while thus partly waging the war at your enemies' cost, you cannot find men to undertake a nice, snug, little experiment of this kind, — when — when, my dear friend, may we expect you to regenerate the world?

Let me remind you that there are still many islands in the Pacific quite at the service of the "Deism-Propagation Society." Or what say you to the African tribes? Plenty

of them still living in a complete state of Troglodytish simplicity ; as St. Clair says, " not many notions to eradicate ;" all in a fair condition to receive the new doctrines ! Only think of the triumph of having to say that the group of the " Taboo " islands, recently inhabited by a set of idolatrous cannibals, or that the tribe of " Quashee Caffres," in a similar condition, had been converted to a pure Deism, their language analyzed and reduced to alphabetical notation, a grammar and dictionary constructed, and the great Herbert's writings translated, by the indefatigable and self-denying labors of the agents of the " Herbert Society ! " Who knows what further efforts this might lead to, if you did not become weary in well-doing ? At all events, you are quite welcome to my subscription.

Finally, if the Deism you have embraced is ever to be worth anything, it must cease to talk so much ; it must cease to be contented with merely writing books ; it must *act*. You will tell me perhaps that Christians, too, talk more than they act ; God knows the taunt is well deserved. Still Christianity, — the inferior system, — does something at all events ; surely the higher and the better ought to do more. If you tell me, that you cannot agree sufficiently — or that those who do agree are too few, and will ever be too few to undertake the work — or that you are unwilling to do anything, — or that men will not listen to you — *will* not be converted, — it is tantamount to a confession either that your system is not, practically, *the* system for this world — or that it is not the truth, — or that it is not truth worth a sacrifice ; or all these together. In any case, it condemns you to the continued insignificance in which you have as yet lingered on in the world. Confute these surmises, my dear friend ; and that you may do so, once more I say — " Devise liberal things."

Such are a few of the hints which I would venture to



give you — not for the resuscitation of Deism, (for it has never been fairly awake yet,) but just to give it a chance of becoming so. To these hints I really think you would do well to take heed, as to a “light shining in a dark” — a *very* dark — “place.”

You see I have kept my word as to not “*boring*” you with the old tale of the “Evidences of Christianity.” So far from that, I have shown you how to demolish Christianity altogether. All, I am persuaded, that you have to do, is to publish a book which shall plainly transcend the Bible; organize a system of worship which shall command the sympathies and secure the co-operation of men, and successfully compete with Christianity in its attacks on Paganism. . . . .

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER XCIX.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

1853.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have heard, as every one else, of Dr. Hassall’s discoveries with his great microscope. Who will not wish that he may go on and prosper, in thus unearthing human iniquity from its subtle retreats in infinitesimal atoms, where it thought to lie *perdu* as securely as in its own invisible thought? He has certainly shown that the solar microscope takes no heed to the maxim, “*De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.*” “There is nothing hidden,” by adroit manipulation and cunning intermixture, that “shall not be made known,” and the lying labels and quackish advertisements shall “be put to silence” by this incorruptible witness.

I am told that several "Houses" have threatened this "peeping Tom" with a prosecution for disintegrating their abominations, and revealing in precise proportions the percentage of villainy in their adulteration. The only answer, it is said, which he condescends to make is, an invitation to come and have a look, *gratis*, at their own handiwork through his microscope! It is also said that none of them will accept his challenge! Wisely, no doubt, for they have the advantage even of Dr. Hassall; they know beforehand; they have anticipated all that he can tell them! Mrs. Macleuchar (in dialogue with the wrathful "Antiquary,") put on her spectacles to discover what she well knew was not to be found, and exclaimed in well-feigned astonishment, — "Saw onie body the like o' that?" These ingenious artists need no solar microscope to tell them what is to be found, though we may well indulge in the old lady's exclamation when we have found it, "Saw onie body the like o' that?"

This microscope shows the intimate structure and organization of the most carefully manipulated composites. Though the component particles may have been subdivided into the most attenuated forms, or equally strewn through the most deceptive medium, the structure of the foreign intruder, whether laminated, fibrous, or what not, stands unmasked among the heterogeneous particles with which it claims relationship, and confesses its roguery under the glare of this stupendous eye. The minutest particle of sand, by the side of the minutest particle of sugar, is as plainly distinguished as if each were as big as a mountain; the atom proclaims itself silix, and is seen to be as unlike the speck of saccharine crystal it would fain be thought, as a square is unlike a circle. Success to the microscope, say I, and to the exorcist who wields it; I know not when I have heard of a scientific application which has so much amused me.

It has come in good time too; for to such an extent had fraud gone that there seemed some chance of our soon finding the last trace of pepper, coffee, and sugar disappearing from the simulated compounds called by these lying names; at least, these articles would soon have been administered only in homœopathic doses.

At one of Dr. Hassall's discoveries, by the way, (of which I am reminded by those last words,) you must have been much amused. He declares that he does not find the genuine "Homœopathic Cocoa" differing at all from the other adulterated specimens of the same article, except by its having *less* cocoa in it! But surely the defence is easy; its vendors would say that they were acting in accordance with the maxims of Hahnemann, and giving their patient customers homœopathic doses!

Even drugs, it seems, are not safe from these odious adulterators, and the physician hardly knows whether he may not be giving poison, otherwise than *secundum artem*. Must we not allow then that here, at least, the homœopathist has the best of it? for who would think to adulterate the millionth of a grain of Belladonna? Yet I know not: let not the homœopathist be too sure; for human cupidity, I fear, would adulterate even the decillionth of a grain, if the decillionth of a farthing per cent. is to be got by it. "Well," it may be said, "any how in such a case it cannot much matter;" but that is mere allopathic ignorance. The homœopathist would doubtless be in agony to think that the trecillionth of his grain of aconite might possibly be defrauded of a decillionth of that fraction. At all events, none will deny that the patient had a right to his fair and full "trecillionth,"—if he could but be ever sure that he had got it!

There is one improvement still required on Dr. Hassall's instrument. One would like to see a "moral solar micro-

scope," that would lay bare, in similar manner, all the "foreign ingredients" — the adulterate mixtures — which enter into the composition of spurious virtue. How amusing the Report of "Analyses" into these would read! How should we find, on examination, a hundred pound donation to — Hospital, by Alderman —, prompted by only two per cent. of charity combined with ninety-eight per cent. of vanity and ostentation: a fine specimen, apparently, of devotion, turning out, on being closely inspected, little else than chips of rites and ceremonies, and the sawdust of formality, with scarcely one per cent. of genuine devotion in it: a parcel of zeal — of the true vermilion dye to all appearance — plainly consisting, when subjected to a high power, of the vulgar blood-red counterfeit of hatred and intolerance: a huge mass of unctuous religious talk utterly destitute of a single particle of sincerity, the article being entirely composed of rancid "cant," scented with essence of hypocrisy: an eloquent discourse of the Rev. Mr. Blarney, discerned to have but five per cent. of genuine emotion in it, — the tears and pathos, warranted real, being nothing but old "theatrical properties:" the decorous sorrows of an undertaker seen at a glance, and with scarcely a higher power than that of common spectacles, to be nothing but downright hilarity painted black; the deep dejection of an heir to a large estate, discerned to be similarly constituted: the tears of a whole party in a mourning coach found to exhibit the merest tincture of genuine grief for the deceased; what other emotion there was being the result of disappointed expectations.

Such are some of the analyses one might expect to see if we had but this wonder-working instrument — a moral solar microscope; but perhaps it is as well for us all that there is none.

Yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER C.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have often heard me mention my friend John Fuller, — who supposed himself to be a lineal descendant of old Thomas Fuller, and felt a little innocent pride in so thinking; the only pride I ever saw in him. He is dead — and has carried with him out of the world as much true worth, I believe, as ever existed in any one heart in it.

He was a genuine Christian if ever there was one. As to the *species*, indeed, I rather think he would have been himself puzzled to say. “Was he Episcopalian — Presbyterian — Calvinist — Arminian?” I hear half a thousand zealots say. I hardly know; but I am sure he was a Christian, for he exhibited in great perfection all the principal “paradoxes” of sentiment and conduct which Bacon represents as characteristic of one. He exercised an absolute faith “in the merits of Christ for his salvation,” and yet was as much impelled to do “good works” as if he thought he could be saved only by his own. “He believed Christ could have no need of anything he could do, and yet made account that he relieved Christ in all his acts of charity;” “he knew he could *do nothing* of himself, and yet *labored* to work out his own salvation.” “He *prayed and labored* for that which he was confident God meant to *give*.” He was full of gentleness, patience, charity; and felt an especial pleasure in doing a kindness to those who had wronged him, and in giving a benefaction to a Christian who did not wear the outward costume he altogether approved. Now, if all that does not make a Christian, I know not what does. He had his “Sibboleth,” or his “Shibboleth,” I dare say, — for who is without it to some extent? — but

he never could prevail on himself to regard a peculiarity of articulation as a different language; or to see why, if men may speak widely different dialects and yet may all be Englishmen, Christians may not talk in very different dialects, too, without ceasing to be Christians; yea, though sometimes the pronunciation be so uncouth, that one may almost doubt whether they be not "barbarians."

He is stark naught, says the Papist, in spite of all this faith and charity, if he did not believe in the infallibility of the Pope and the seven sacraments! Pardon me, Mr. Romanist, you know about as much about the matter as the Brahmin in Marmontel's tale, who, when the young English officer has saved his daughter's life at the hazard of his own, exclaims—"Is it possible that so excellent a person should not believe in Vishnoo and his Seven Transmigrations?"

John Fuller did not deny that minor differences of doctrine, or even diversities of ritual, were things of some moment; he thought that every Christian was bound to satisfy his conscience respecting such things, and adhere to those opinions which he thought really nearest the truth; but while he acted on his own conscientious convictions and preferences, he could not allow the essence of Christianity to consist in trifles, and never hesitated, where he *did* see that essence embodied in character, to embrace it with the full sympathies of a Christian. "Many errors," he would say, "will quietly drop away with the progress of truth itself, and many more with the progress of charity. Others of little moment (strange as it seems to say so) I hardly wish ever should drop; for if men were brought to a perfect unanimity, where would be the scope for the exercise of mutual charity? There is as much—nay, a greater difficulty in vanquishing antipathies of religious *sentiment*, even

when differences are of little moment, than almost any other."

I have said that John had his preferences and his opinions on minor matters; but never so as to interfere with his love of intercommunion among Christians, of whatever type. But he did not think it competent to him to break down altogether the sacred enclosure, or diminish by a hair's breadth the wide interval which still subsists between the most imperfect Christian, if really one, and him who is no Christian at all; and thus, though he was the most catholic, he was also the most rigid of men. Unhappy result of his consistency! He was thought lax by his brethren and bigoted by the world! But it never troubled John. He could hear with edification a sermon from one of those he called "his great preachers," whether preached in the Cathedral or in a Conventicle, and threw in his modest mite into almost any treasury consecrated to Christian enterprise and philanthropy; sometimes — how am I ashamed to say it! — with a peculiar gusto, if his modest tribute was in aid of associations which a little differed from those he most preferred!

In short, he was much in the condition of a certain Canadian convert of whom I once heard the following droll story. He had a dream, he said, one night, that he was translated to heaven, which to his imagination seemed very much like a "large church or meeting-house;" (I devoutly trust he was mistaken in *that*.) He said he thought Jesus Christ questioned each one before him as to his ecclesiastical position. One said he was an Episcopalian. "Then," said Christ, "you can go and sit down in that pew — *there* all the Episcopalians are gathered together." Another said he was a Baptist; he was in like manner told to repair to another pew. A third said he was a Presbyterian, and

a third pew was assigned to him ; and so of the rest. At last it came to the turn of the poor savage to be catechized ; and not being sufficiently *up* to the nice divisions of ecclesiastical and doctrinal theology, he was afraid that there would be no "pew" found for him. Trembling, he replied when asked what *he* was — "I am a — Christian, and love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart." "Oh, then," said the benignant querist, "*you* may walk all about heaven, and go hither and thither just as it pleases you." I am afraid that Canadian was a very sly fellow !

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CI.

TO C. MASON, ESQ.

GLEN SHIRRAO, Aug. 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will be glad to hear that I have safely reached my old haunt, and have located myself in the family of my worthy farmer, who, as well as his wife, two sons, and three daughters, — to say nothing of the dogs, — are extremely anxious to show me every civility. The weather is splendid — if it does but last. This is one of those bright dazzling August mornings of which we have, perhaps, three or four in the course of our English summer ; — just enough to enable us to comprehend the sarcasm of the Persian ambassador, who, when asked whether it was really true that the Persians worshipped the sun, said, "Yes, and so would the English if they ever saw him !"

I was in some doubt the first morning whether I should be able to get my morning cold bath, — to me an essential of life. But I am accommodating — being indifferent.



whether I baptize by "sprinkling," "affusion" or "immersion," though I prefer the last. On the present occasion, I was accommodated with a washing-tub, and a huge water-pot (without the "rose"), full of water. My host was about to pour its contents into the tub. But seeing the thing so handy, and as it was a growing morning, I asked for the "rose;" and becoming at once plant and gardener, stood in the tub, and lifting the water-pot over my head, *shower-bathed* it to my great satisfaction, and I hope with some benefit to my stature. I infer it may be so from the difficulty I afterwards felt in shaving, which could surely only have been from my beard having grown rapidly. I state the fact with the impartiality of a philosopher, without deciding whether it was due to the watering-pot or a bad razor; pray choose your hypothesis.

By the way, talking of shaving, what a prodigious number of fantastical beardlets I have seen in my recent journey! The other day, on stepping into a railway carriage, I found the opposite seats occupied by three hirsute gentlemen, who, if they had not been so young, would have looked quite venerable, and filled me with the like awe which seized the Gauls when they spied the long-bearded senators in the Roman Capitol. I really begin to fear that the abominable appendage is about to be restored among us. I met a youngster the other day whose beard was just in the worst possible "stage of development:" that is, he had got a minikin tuft on his chin and a thin crop on his upper lip which simply had the effect of making him look execrably *dirty*. He held with me a learned argument for the retention of the excrementitious capillaries. Though not old enough to have a beard, he was old enough to be an Atheist, which he owned with that sweet complacency with which so many sucking philosophers of our day, after reading Comte or the "Vestiges," do the like. He professed

to have a reverence for his beard as a gift of Nature, and to think it a sort of profanity to throw it aside. By the way, I dare say, if the beard controversy goes on much longer, we shall have an orthodox and heterodox beard-party, as much attached, and with as much reason, to their respective doctrines, as the Big-endians and Little-endians of Lilliput. — But to return to my youngster. He innocently asked, *why* we should shave away what "*Nature* had given us." "Why," said I, "suppose *Nature* has made a mistake in giving us such a thing? Is it not wise to rectify it?" "Made a mistake!" said he. "Yes," said I; "nothing more easy according to *your* hypothesis, for you confess to Atheism; why may not the beard be an error of Nature? If unintelligent 'laws of development,' or unconscious necessity or blind chance has made the world and beards, I see no reason why you should suppose everything for the best: and as *you* have intelligence, at least *think* so," I continued, smiling, "and the universe has *none*, you and all of us ought to be allowed to reform, alter, and amend at pleasure." It was not easy to see how to defend the orthodoxy of wearing beards as a gift of Nature on such a theory.

On another occasion, a youth contended that as God had given us beards, He must have intended they should be worn; and that it was a sort of impiety to get rid of them. But this proved too much; for I asked whether he let his nails and beard grow like Nebuchadnezzar, or as far as nature chose to let them? "No," he said, "clip the beard you may, — but that is different from shaving!" "A subtle distinction," said I; "it is a question of limits, I fear, which none can determine. Are we at liberty to clip within two inches? — one inch? — the tenth of an inch? — the millionth of an inch? For if so, is not shaving close clipping, as clipping indeed is nothing but a sort of slovenly

shaving? Or is there some orthodox limit to which the beard may grow, sacred at once from both scissors or razor?"

What can be the *final cause* of the beard? Some physiologists say that it is to help carry off any spare particles of the system — any "superfluities of naughtiness" — and so serves, with other excretions, to keep up the equilibrium between nutrition and consumption. But, according to this, a glutton's beard ought to grow faster than that of other folks. Be pleased to ask the aldermen of London whether they shave twice a day: also whether this is the reason why artisans need not shave more than once a week? But, above all, inquire diligently of those who wear a beard, what special gratification they have in so doing, that we may have a proper induction as to the *final cause* of this singular appendage, which has ever been to me as great a mystery as a monkey's tail.

Yours ever faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

P. S. I fell in the other day with one of these patient *Job*-like anglers, (up to his knees, by the way, in the stream,) who had been at his sport for some hours and caught nothing. I told him I thought it must be miserably dull work. He contended, (I suppose he was bound to make the best of present circumstances,) that the fewer the fish the greater the sport, as more skill was required, and so on. I almost angered him by asking whether, as it was thus a problem of limits, it would not be the greatest sport of all to angle for a single gudgeon turned loose in the Atlantic?

## LETTER CII.

TO A GENTLEMAN WHO WOULD BE A CHRISTIAN — YET REJECTED ALL THE PECULIAR FACTS AND DOCTRINES OF “HISTORICAL” CHRISTIANITY.

MY DEAR SIR,

You talk of the cumbrous character of the “Christian evidences,” — and especially of the “pithless” philological, critical, and chronological discussions of “historic” difficulties.

To this, I think, I *might* retort by saying that I find few people so prone as some who have adopted a latitudinarian theology, — except those indeed, who have rejected Christianity even in name, — to dwell on these same difficulties; not for the purpose of attaining satisfaction about them, but to puzzle and perplex those who are convinced of the *substantive* truth of Christianity, and are content to leave all such minor problems unsolved till they can obtain further evidence. I am seldom long in company with certain men without finding them busy with the “discrepancies” in our Saviour’s “genealogy,” or the geological difficulties in the first chapter of Genesis; or anxious to know whether it was going out of Jericho or into it that our Lord healed the blind man, or whether two were healed or only one. In short, I find no persons so ready to reduce the evidences of Christianity to “pithless” discussions, as those who receive a minimum of Christianity; nor any who so often ask satisfaction of their difficulties as those who hope it may never be found!

But with you, I shall not think it worth while thus to retort. I shall carry the war into your own quarters. I shall, without hesitation, affirm that it is theologians of *your*

stamp who, of all men, are most open to the charge of binding "critical" mill-stones about people's necks, and that it is equally applicable to your theology as a *product*, and to the desperate *processes* by which your alchemists of criticism distil it from the Scriptures. You tell me that you receive, in some sense, Christianity as a divinely originated system; and yet you reject all that is miraculous and supernatural in its professed *facts*, as also all that has seemed to the *generality* of the readers of the New Testament for eighteen centuries, to be undeniably characteristic of its *doctrines*. All this you regard either as the product of the prejudice and "stand-point" (a convenient thing is that "stand-point") of those who historically transmitted Christianity to us; or else, as *seemingly* on the page of Scripture, indeed, but, in truth, not there. By the resources of a clever exegesis, and a free use of the critical sponge, it may be expelled altogether. In short, it is all the error of interpretation!

Whichever of these *two* theories be adopted, I assure you, I find your argument against a "critical theology" irresistible, and the New Testament transformed into the most burdensome book in the world. And if I *could* be got to the "point of view" necessary to adopt either, I should infallibly go further, out of sheer inability to deal with so intractable a phenomenon as *your* Christianity! If I adopt the *first* theory, and suppose that the "facts and doctrines" which *seem* so plainly written in the New Testament, and which are generally admitted to be there, are yet all mistake, gross ignorance, prejudice, delusion, on the part of the writers, — I know no one reason in the world why I should regard, with any remaining veneration, men who, at every turn, were so full of egregious blunders on the most vital points. If, for example, they *meant* to maintain the literal reality of their miraculous narratives, and supernat-

nally derived doctrines; if they meant to assert the Pre-existence, much more the Divinity of Christ, — the dogma of atonement by his death, — the divine inspiration and authority of their communications, and other kindred doctrines, — and yet these were fanatical delusions, and are to be wholly rejected, I see no sufficient reason why I should regard with even common respect such comprehensive blunders; or *what* is the residuum, after all, which such large excisions have left for my reception; or *why* that residuum, which itself differs indefinitely with different interpreters among you — should be regarded with any more reverence than the rest. If you say, “because it can be *otherwise* proved true,” — by all means hold it for true then; but it surely cannot be regarded as any the *more* true for being inculcated by those who do not give it its authority, and who in other things have so egregiously blundered and gone astray! You ought to hold it for true, not at all *because* Apostles have written, but *in spite* of their having written! that is, in spite of the presumptions which their countless and absurd errors would naturally create against it; and on account of *other* evidence so strong, that even *their* extravagances cannot prejudice it! On this theory, I say, your theology is simply a “critical burden,” which “neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear;” and I will add, nor will our children; and the only consequence of its fair application on my own part, would be that I should summarily rid myself of such troublesome incumbrances as the Apostles altogether!

If, on the other hand, it be said that the doctrines which to ninety-nine out of every hundred readers of the New Testament *seem* to be there, are *not* there, and that a skilful and bold criticism can expel them from the page, then I can only say that I find your “critical burdens” at least equally intolerable. I have sometimes tried to interpret the

New Testament in your fashion ; — but I find in every chapter, in almost every verse, the *natural* sense so rebelling against the critical rack and thumbscrew, such a constant outcry from the tortured language against the violence done to it, that, on my honor, compassion itself cannot stand it. Not only is a *non-natural* sense, not only is forced construction perpetually necessary, but I am obliged to use the sponge itself so often and so ruthlessly, — nay, to shovel away so many entire chapters bodily, — that I feel that *if* the writers meant only what your system involves, by all that language I have twisted, and tortured, and pared, and cut away, and thrown aside, they were so astoundingly ignorant of the ordinary use of human language, that whatever else they might be, “*Revealers*” they were not ; that so far from having the gift of tongues, they could not speak with one ; and that they must certainly have believed one dogma of the Romish Church, — that the mysteries of religion are most worthily expressed in a language which the worshippers cannot understand ! If *your* system be indeed Christianity, the very construction of the books which contain it is an ignominious failure.

To arrive at such a Christianity, by thus dealing with the only documents which do or can tell us a syllable about it, implies, as I say, an immeasurably heavier burden of criticism than any of those dry controversies on the “*Evidences*” with which you twit me.

To me it seems clear as the day, that if such a system as yours *be* that of the New Testament, — its writers never can, in any sense, have come from God, to tell it to us. If God, in the Scripture, has made known religious truth by human agency, the least we can suppose is that He employed men who could use human language so as to convey, to the majority at least of candid readers, what they really meant : and if what *you* call the current, but mistaken,

Christianity, be that meaning, there can be no doubt He has done so; for the style of Scripture, as it is in general wonderfully clear and simple, so it has conveyed this meaning to the immense majority of readers in every age. The miraculous and supernatural "facts," and the "doctrines" of the "current theology" have been generally supposed, by learning and ignorance alike, to be *naturally* conveyed by the language of the New Testament. Plentifully, I admit, have interpreters differed, as regards modes of Church government, and as regards many minor doctrines; as regards also the *philosophy* of doctrines, which are not minor; but I repeat, in the immense majority of cases, the facts and doctrines you especially dislike have been supposed to be what the Apostles designed to convey to us. If they did not, the Scripture has failed of its object; they who wrote it have hopelessly misled, not enlightened, the world; and I should hold this as a conclusive indication that they did *not* come from God.

To receive therefore any such system as that you defend, necessitates a much more "intolerable" criticism than any I find employed by "current Christianity." When I have applied it, and compare the results with the documents from which I have so laboriously extracted it, I cannot bring myself to believe that those who penned the documents can have been half as capable of expressing their meaning as nine-tenths of mankind in general; while it is little less than blasphemy to imagine that men who have so stupidly misled the world can have been employed to communicate a system of divine "Revelation,"—which, after all, was to reveal to the world the contrary of its true import!

No;—the "burden" of such an hypothesis is indeed "intolerable." I could be more easily reconciled to Deism, however unsatisfactory and disputable its meagre doc-



trines, than while holding little more, bind about my neck such a yoke as that of a "Revelation" which can only be understood by supposing its authors did not understand the modes of common speech, by their misuse of which they have actually cajoled the great bulk of their honest and faithful readers, in every age and country, to infer the contrary of what they meant in all their most momentous utterances!

You frankly confessed, in our recent interview, that those who adopt your critical principles have ever been few; and that, few as you are, you occupied every conceivable point between bare Deism and the "current orthodoxy,"—a result which must naturally be expected from the impossibility of fixing the limit within which different minds will apply your "cumbersome" apparatus of criticism.

Forgive me, for saying that, for similar reasons, "few" you will always be. The generality of people will never endure your intolerable processes of criticism, whether you call its products *rationalistic*,—on the supposition that the Apostles sincerely delivered a system, nine-tenths of which is to be rejected as fanatical nonsense; or *exegetical*,—on the supposition that they did not say what nearly everybody is irresistibly led to believe they *meant* to say! The generality of readers will recoil from the horrible ordeal of logical and critical torture to which you would subject them; they will go on further than you, or take the "current Christianity."—This last, not *stereotyped*, indeed, will still embrace, under some or other modifications, the "supernatural narratives" of the New Testament, and these doctrines at least,—the Pre-existence of Christ, the union of two natures in Him, and the atonement for sin by His death. These things are so entwined with the very texture of the New Testament,

that, like the supernatural in its history, they cannot be rubbed out without making huge holes in it. I do not say, for I do not think, that men will all agree in the reception of any one theory of the *philosophy* of these doctrines; for, as to this, Scripture itself is silent. But the doctrines themselves, I feel convinced, cannot be evaded by any one who honestly asks "What is Christianity?" and when they cease to be received, it will only be by a cost of criticism which will render readers of the New Testament bankrupts in faith altogether.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

### LETTER CIII.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND DISPOSED TO MAKE THE "DISCREPANCIES" IN SCRIPTURE A REASON FOR RENOUNCING CHRISTIANITY.

1853.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

You tell me you cannot reconcile all the discrepancies which may be detected in minute portions of the Scripture history, and that you *therefore* feel compelled to give up the truth of Christianity!

What a "therefore" is that! I pity your logic. Pardon me, but between the premises and the conclusion there is no connection in the world. It is much as if you said, you cannot demonstrate the compatibility of all the phenomena of the universe with the divine benevolence,—and *therefore*, you must become an Atheist; nay, it is really as absurd as if you were to say that you cannot reconcile all the discrepancies of English historians, and therefore give up the History of England: for discrep-

ancies in a history may be numerous and real, and yet every important fact of it be true.

"You cannot reconcile," you say, "all the discrepancies;" and I may retort, "Who asked you?" Certainly, *I* should not; for I cannot reconcile all those discrepancies either. But as to giving up Christianity as divine—or the New Testament, as the Word of God on *that* account,—I should as soon think, as some one said, in a somewhat similar case, "of burning down London to get rid of the bugs."

"What are you to do?" you ask; "what can you do?" Why, so far from your being compelled to do what you meditate,—there are, as the late Sir Robert Peel used to say, no less than "three courses" open to you, any one of which would be infinitely more logical than the renunciation of Christianity.

I. Even if you were to affirm,—what perhaps you will affirm,—not only that you cannot *reconcile* all these discrepancies, but that they are, and will for ever be, *irreconcilable*; that they are mistakes of the writers, just because "inspiration" did not plenarily protect them against infirmities of intellect, any more than it did against all errors of conduct; still you would not be justified in such a conclusion, as you seem to think inevitable. And I say that this is proved even by the conduct of the *bulk* of those who chiefly insist on this view of the discrepancies,—who make the most of them, who often perversely pet them; for even these do not *therefore* affirm that the entire evidence on behalf of Christianity as a thing of Divine origin, is naught; they still affirm that the substantial truth of its facts is incontrovertible; and that the office of "criticism" is, at best, only to eliminate the minute portions in which "irreconcilable discrepancy" is to be traced. I know, indeed, that some of these "elim-

inators" proceed in this task at a rare rate, and "eliminate" nearly the whole book; "turn the house," as the saying is, "out of the windows;" but many, notwithstanding, *do* apply the theory within perfectly insignificant and innocuous limits. Now I say not that this is the best method of dealing with such matters;—I think either the second or the third (which I shall presently touch) is better. Still if, as is very possible, those who hold this theory apply the principle honestly, and only to the minute and trivial portions of the New Testament History in which alone anything approaching "irreconcilable contradiction" can, with a shadow of reason, be pretended,—the *result* is much the same as if the whole book were accepted as divine. So little is rejected, that it does not appreciably affect the sum of what is retained. To ask the difference is of as little significance as to ask whether somebody is richer than you, who has a thousand pounds, when you have the same sum all but a thousandth part of a farthing!

I know, indeed, there are those who parade and exaggerate these difficulties for the very purpose of finding excuses for the conclusion *you* seem in danger of arriving at. They have accordingly always magnified and multiplied them; but the bulk of those who insist on them in our day do *not* insist on them as at all affecting the claim of Christianity to be divinely originated, and they therefore *prove* that it is at least possible to hold this theory and yet not give up Christianity. Nor can you in justice do so, unless you have first confuted the immensely varied and convergent proofs of its truth, and the substantial credibility of its documents;—any more than, in the parallel case, you can set aside the history of England or Greece because you have found variations and contradictions in the recital of particular facts!

But you will, perhaps, say, "Does not this impose upon me the task of *eliminating* what is false? And does it not compel me to reject the idea of plenary inspiration?"

Recollect what I have said;—I do *not* affirm that this *first* way is the *best* possible way of confronting the difficulties which you say perplex you; I am only contending that it is consistent and intelligible, though *I* prefer another;—of which presently. But as to the above questions, I must answer, on this first theory, in the affirmative. You must, no doubt, diligently and carefully eliminate the fragments of error which *you* deem such; you must winnow the wheat. "Am I capable of such an exercise of intellect?" you will say. I have nothing to do with that; but this I will say, 1. That it makes not the substantive truth of the New Testament less true, nor justifies you in rejecting the whole, because you think a ten thousandth part doubtful; and 2. That if you reject *only* what you call "demonstrably *contradictory*," I am convinced your task will be light enough, and that the balance which will weigh the difference between your New Testament and mine will be a very delicate one! Further, your task, even on this theory, will in fact involve no other difficulty than you submit to in dealing with any book of authentic history,—minute portions of which you reject as erroneous; no other difficulty than a judge or juryman is compelled to confront, who, in taking the sum of evidence, rejects in a similar manner what is contradictory or irreconcilable with the main facts substantiated, while he yet cleaves to his conclusion notwithstanding. Now I say this is more consistent and intelligible than the course you propose, which really is much as if a judge were to say, "Gentlemen, there are some minute facts which seem irreconcilable, and therefore I have nothing to say to you;" or as if the jury were to say, "Till these facts are fully reconciled we can give no verdict."

Nor can it be proved that, on such a theory of inspiration as that now implied, God would have done anything, (however improbable *à priori*), out of analogy with His procedure in other cases; as God has placed us in an analogous difficulty in other cases, so, for aught you know, He may in this. To discriminate—to judge with candor—to hold fast what is proven in spite of difficulties—may be required of us as part of that exercise of a docile faith, of an unprejudiced reason, which throughout our whole probation He has provided for us here. Indeed, on *any* theory of inspiration, He has practically involved us in much the same difficulty: for even on the theory of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, He has Himself left on the sacred page the traces of *apparent* discrepancies that perplex and baffle us. Now on the theory that He occasionally allowed human *infirmity* to introduce error and mistake, He would only have subjected us to much the same discipline.

As to your second inference,—that you must, at all events, give up the plenary inspiration—the absolute infallible truth of every syllable of Scripture,—I acknowledge that what you *prove* to be error cannot be inspired; only be sure that it is so proved. That *will* necessitate your giving up those minute portions to which you can any demonstrated error or palpable contradiction attach.

Now can you believe, perhaps you will say, that God has commissioned men to declare religious truth to the world has inspired them with the knowledge of it, has wrought miracles and uttered prophecy to authenticate it, and yet has left the very messengers to be sometimes misled by ignorance? to mistake fact? to blunder in the very delivery of their message?

Now, (mind once again) I do not deny this difficulty, and, in consequence, prefer another method of dealing with the matter, as I shall presently show you; but still, I say,

that even such a supposition is perfectly intelligible and consistent, compared with the alternative you propose to yourself—the summary rejection of Christianity!

For, after all, if we admit this theory, does it leave you in greater difficulty than Theism leaves you? Does not the constitution of the world present you with analogous facts? While millions of phenomena attest the divine goodness, do you not every now and then stumble on some which look the other way? Is the plague or the rattlesnake quite intelligible? Do you not, when you meet with such unaccountable phenomena, say, "They are difficulties indeed—things quite inexplicable, but they must not be allowed to override the deductions which the immense majority out of every million of facts will justify?" Do you not say, "I believe there must be good reasons for these ugly things, though I do not know what they are?"

You may perhaps rejoin, "Yes, but after all, a cobra or rattlesnake is God's direct work, and therefore I believe there must be good reasons for it, though I am ignorant of them." I answer, "Very well; and may you not say the same of what is inexplicable in what God permits? Would it be any more wonderful if God should permit human ignorance and infirmity to introduce some trivial errors into His word (mind, I say not it *is* so) than that His power and wisdom should do what you can in no way comprehend in His works?"

But if you *will* have a precisely analogous case, I can give it you in the moral government of God. There God, every day and everywhere, permits the remaining follies of the wise and the remaining infirmities of the virtuous to chequer the results of their beneficent action on the world; to mingle much error with their truth, some evil with their good. And can you prove that it *may not* have been to some extent thus, even in the construction of a

divine revelation? Would not such a course be at least in analogy "with the constitution and course of nature?" If He permitted, though we know not why, His fair creation to be invaded with evil, and "the enemy by night to sow tares among the wheat;" would it be inconceivable, if, in like manner, He should have suffered minute errors to enter into the texture of the Bible?

Recollect, however, what I have said; I do *not* think this method so eligible as the *second* of the three courses, or as the third;—but this I say—it is perfectly intelligible and consistent compared with the coarse application of your Gordian shears.

"What then, is your second theory?" you will say. But you must wait till to-morrow. I have well filled my sheet, and I hate crossing. I conclude by begging you to believe me,

Your loving friend,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CIV.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR YOUTH,

As to my second theory of dealing with the "discrepancies," it is a very simple one, and not less admirable,—namely, to let them *alone*;—to postpone them till further light is thrown upon them; not to *anticipate* the true theory of them; to refrain from pronouncing them either absolutely insoluble or otherwise.

And the *general* evidence for the Bible is such as to justify this abstinence from dogmatism. We can *afford* to wait. A Christian may say with justice—"When I can solve these difficulties, I am glad; when I cannot, I am willing to suspend my judgment; th

nd. they never





can (whatever be the solution), shake the substantive credibility of the great facts and main statements of the scriptural documents; adequate evidence against *these* must be an earthquake which shall subvert the very foundations of the faith, and leave the whole fabric a wreck, not a flash of critical lightning, which grazes, or splinters, or even dislodges a stone or two in some remote turret or ornamental pinnacle. I can *wait* — I can *afford* to wait — no one hurries me; — why should I be so incontinent of my opinion as to pronounce before I am sure that I have all the possible data? Whether the discrepancies are ultimately to be disposed of by supposing something less than indefectible inspiration for every particle of canonical Scripture, or by finding that they yield, *as so many others have already done*, to mere accurate recensions of the text, or more severe collation of the Scripture with itself or with profane writers, or unexpected recoveries of fragments of ancient history, I leave for awhile; for, either way, the things which must thus be left are but “dust in the balance;” subtracted or added, they will not appreciably affect the result; and so, whether zealous Stephen really confounded the sepulchre which Jacob bought of the father of Shechem with that which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite, or not, I shall magnanimously leave to future inquiries, and sleep none the worse for it!

I am fully aware that the infidel deems it infinitely important that such weighty points should be instantly settled; and indeed, from the eagerness with which he introduces, and the pertinacity with which he discusses them, one can hardly help fancying that *he*, and not Christianity, is the party principally interested in the issue; and in very truth, it is so; for it is of immense importance to him that Christianity should seem false; of little importance to Christianity that such discrepancies should be reconciled.

But there is still a third course, in my judgment still better than the *second*, and the one to which I myself most incline; it is that of combining, with that *abstinence* from all dogmatic decision which the *second* course requires, a reverential remembrance of the many instances in which discrepancies, once vehemently insisted on, have yielded to further investigation. Hence, a suspicion, at all events founded on induction, that if we will but wait with a little patience, that patience will be rewarded with a satisfactory solution. Just so we act when we meet with phenomena which *seem* to shock our notions of the divine benevolence, in the department of physical inquiry; we do not foolishly imagine that every difficulty we meet with that we cannot solve is absolutely insoluble, but we wait with confidence for further light.

"But is not this an act of unreasoning faith?" you will perhaps say. — No, an act of *reason*; for it is founded on experience of the past. I see that many difficulties which half a century ago were as clamorously proclaimed to be "palpable contradictions" to all history and all probability as those which still perplex us, have been removed. What *right* then, have I to assume that the same will not happen, if I have but patience, with the remainder? What right have I to suppose that the dogmatism which has been proved so hasty in past times, and in other cases, is never to be proved so any more? Ought I not, on a fair *induction*, (not merely on an *à priori* conclusion that indefectible truth *must* belong to all Scripture,) to wait not only with patience, but with hope? And I *can* wait, not merely because so many difficulties have yielded, but because I see so plainly that man has more than a trifle yet to learn; that antiquities, history, ethnology, philosophy, chronology, geology, and half a dozen other sciences, are by no means exhausted; and that their progress will, together with the study of the

sacred books themselves, tend more and more to throw light on these subjects.

All this of course is just simply saying that I am not entitled to assume a discrepancy to be *absolutely insoluble*, so long as I see that others which were thought so, proclaimed so, and rejoiced in as such by infidels half a century ago, are now allowed to be so no longer.

We may well believe the truth of what Butler says of the word of God, in his celebrated work: "It is not at all incredible that a book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered, for all the same phenomena and the same faculties of investigation from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and past age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before;" and for a similar reason we may equally well believe that increasing light will be thrown on the *difficulties* which meet us, and meet us no less in the investigation of the Works than in the study of the Word of God.

Both the works and the Word of God are indeed inexhaustible both in beauties and in mysteries; fraught with every element designed to educate the whole man — and amongst the rest, with a few "hard sayings" for a diligent reason to investigate, and a few, harder still, for a docile faith to receive without fully comprehending at all.

However, my dear youth, ponder, I beg you, my words, and see whether *any one* of the three alternatives I have laid before you is not more rational (as I believe it is) than the rash alternative you talk so lightly about.

You will observe that these remarks apply only to — what I understand you to be troubled with — the apparent "discrepancies" which you find in Scripture. If you mean much more than this; — if, when you pretend to see *no* discrepancy, you choose to refuse credence to a fact because

it is "mysterious," or transcends your comprehension, why, there is, of course, no end to *that* sort of objection; and you might as well doubt whether there is such a thing as the union of body and soul;—for that is as much above your comprehension as anything in Scripture; in short, your creed will be speedily reduced to — zero.

If you urge that the *first* theory of the "discrepancies" requires to be cautiously applied, — that it will be apt to yield different results in different hands, — that it seems a somewhat slippery place for a foothold, I grant it; but you will observe that I do not think it is the most philosophical or modest of the three. Still I am sure that it (and still more the others) is modesty, sense, philosophy itself, compared with that Curtius-like leap into the gulf of infidelity which you propose to take!

Sure I am that if a man apply even the *first* theory, with honest and rigorous candor, restricting it to the petty details in which the paraded "discrepancies" are found, he will reject only infinitesimal quantities; while millions have acquiesced in the second and third with perfect tranquillity to their faith. Nay — Christians in general *must* have done so; since no one pretends to be able to reconcile all these discrepancies.

And thus if you think that they are ever likely to be of any weight as against Christianity, let *facts* confute you. Not only, as I have said, do the majority even of those who most vehemently contend for the presence of minute error in the Scriptures, tell you that they do not therefore dream of its being necessary to abandon Christianity itself, and that you are consequently wrong in *your* conclusion; but the incessant repetition from age to age of the very same class of difficulties does not make the smallest appreciable impression on the Christian world at large! If, therefore, the hope of Infidelity be founded on such "discrepancies,"

never, surely, was hope more delusive. As I was recently obliged to remind a young contemporary of yours, (who pleads for undisguised Deism,) *experience* has fully proved that nothing can be expected from the perpetual parade of these "discrepancies." Somehow each generation of Infidels imagines it is saying something new and to the purpose when it urges them. They have been tried, over and over again; and against the vast fabric of Christian evidence, and the general conviction of its truth, they produce no more effect than firing pop-guns against granite. In fact, we find the *mass* of the people will not heed them. Take, for example, that "discrepancy" on which you lay so much stress in your last. Why, it has been reproduced in every age. It was insisted on by Celsus; by Porphyry, by Collins; by Bolingbroke; it was again iterated by Voltaire; it duly reappears in Strauss; in short, in almost every infidel writer: but it is of no avail whatever against the impression produced by the general evidence. The case is much as in every difficult trial in a court of justice; there is sure to be some point — often several — which no man can make anything of, which nobody can clear up; everybody wants satisfaction thereon, and no one can give it; meantime everybody is convinced by the general stream and convergency of the evidence; and with the exception of a crotchety "Infidel" here and there, the prisoner is acquitted or hanged with the all but unanimous verdict of the community.

Yours very truly,

R. E. H. G.

# LETTER CV.

TO ALFRED WEST, ESQ.

1853.

MY DEAR WEST,

I have had a talk with your young relative, and you may set your mind at rest on *one* point. He is no Atheist nor Pantheist. He is a great admirer, indeed, of the theory of the "Vestiges;" but then, much as you and I recoil from the theory there propounded, (as everybody else will in a dozen years,) that theory does not necessarily involve Atheism—which its author, in fact, expressly disavows. He has been often charged, it is true, with holding views *favorable* to Atheism; and it must be confessed, that the first editions of his work were greatly calculated to justify the notion; yet we cannot, and ought not, to doubt, unless he be a very hypocrite of hypocrites, that he means what he says in the successive *éclaircissements* which he has given to the world of his doctrines. when he tells us, therefore, that he believes in an intelligent and conscious Personality who has "developed" the universe out of the fire-mist. For my own part, after this, I must believe him a Theist; though as to the "fire mist," I rather think it is all "moonshine" of the author's fancy.

Nor indeed, as has been well remarked by several writers, can any such theory really affect the question of *Theism* at all; if, indeed, such rare "transformations" and "transmutations," and "developments" of organized beings, as it supposes, (were there but any proof of them,) ought not rather to *enhance* the proofs of divine power and intelligence. Surely such transmutations not less require power and intelligence than the received hypothesis of successive creations; for even if the elements of the material universe, if matter itself,—be supposed eternal, it can never be

proved that the properties and laws in virtue of which it has been "developed" into such wondrous results inherently belong to it ; or that if some properties *did* delong to it, a chance-medley combination or blindly necessary application of them would make such a symmetrical and harmonious universe.

All the usual arguments for Theism, therefore, remain unaffected by any such hypothesis ; the indications of order, of design,—the inferences from effect to cause, which, let hyper-metaphysical brains do what they will to invalidate, men in general, a million out of every million and one, *will* cling to and repose in,—are just what they were ; they are no more affected by any such hypothesis as that of the "Vestiges," however irrational and fantastical it may be on other grounds, than is the argument for the intelligent fabrication of our bodies by the fact that we all had *fathers*, or for that of a butterfly by the fact that it came out of a chrysalis ! The mere number, subtlety, and duration of the phenomena of "transmutation" make no difference in this argument, so long as the several *parts* of the series, one and all, are marked by the same characteristics of "design ;" rather, the inference is (as already said) but strengthened and multiplied at each remove. If A, B, and C be all stamped by their respective signatures of design, it were strange to suppose that that inference is invalidated because C came from B and B from A. Let the *pedigree* of these phenomena be long or short, the arguments from Theism remain just where they were.

Not, of course, that I think the theory on that account harmless ; a muddle-headed youth, no doubt, may easily abuse it to Atheism ; for if he can but relegate the phenomena in question to a sufficiently remote antiquity,—reduce the universe to a *very* fine "fire-mist," and interpose a *sufficient* number of changes and "transformations"

between the present complexity of the universe and the first touch, *next-to-nothing* (!), which set all *agoing*, and he is apt to think, not, as he ought, that the wisdom and power which evolved all things from such an infinitesimal germ and pre-arranged the evolution and march of all these stupendous "developments" are the more worthy of admiration; but that he has got rid of the necessity of a Deity altogether, for that truly a Deity must have had next to nothing to do.

I have no fear, however, that this theory ever will or can make Atheists; for if it be but understood, *that* is impossible.

In point of philosophy, it is worthless; because it is a perfectly *gratuitous*, fantastical departure, under the mask of philosophizing, from all the cardinal doctrines of Baconian induction.

It is a species of *very* bad poetry; the imagination is allowed absolute license, and we are taught to believe things, not because it is proved they are, but because we don't know but what *possibly* they may have been! Thus we are told, for example, that though instances of the "transmutation" of species cannot be produced,—though all the facts throughout the entire range of authentic history are against it,—though we never see any indications of monkeys turning into men, or fishes into birds, (though I will not say that we have not sometimes the initial process by which young philosophers promise to "develop" into puppies,)—yet that such things may have been fifty millions of years ago; that the whole term and sphere of our observation are too limited to allow of such spectacles, but that we do *not* know what twenty or a hundred millions of years might do! What sort of philosophy is it which tells us that we may infer something, because we do *not* know that, in fifty millions of years or so, something of which we have



not the slightest proof that it ever did occur, might not occur! How would Bacon have felt abashed and insulted, if he had been told that these his professed disciples, who are ever pleading and profaning his name, would argue that we are to consider such and such conclusions probable, not because we know what *is* or *has been*, but precisely because we do *not* know that it may not have been! It is to dream, not to philosophize,—to talk in this way. It is just as if a man challenged us to believe that not only is Jupiter inhabited, but that it is inhabited by animals with three heads and fifteen hands, inasmuch as none can say that it may *not* be; nay, *because* we do *not* know that it is *not*! Surely any rational creature would reply, “Until you know that it *is*, do not venture on any hypothesis on the subject. Do not make your very ignorance — this ‘you do *not* know’ — the basis of pretended knowledge.” I believe that, in spite of the boasted advance of science in our day, there never has been a period in which more rash hypotheses have been broached; or more at which Bacon would have stood aghast, to hear his name pleaded for them! But your young friend is an ardent admirer of the hypothesis of “development;” and I must tell you in another letter, if I can get time to scribble it to-morrow, the heads of our conversation.

Yours ever,

R. E. H. G

## LETTER CVI.

TO THE SAME.

1832.

MY DEAR WEST,

I promised to let you know of my conversation with your young friend, who, after reading the “Vestiges,” has so violent a *penchant* for a simious ancestry.

I found it difficult, I promise you, to treat the subject with sufficient gravity. "Why," said he, with a half-defiant air, in reply to a little banter, "why should I not believe that at a remote period I might have had a monkey for my ancestor?"

I told him gravely, "That perhaps it might be difficult to say why he should *not* think so."

"But now, seriously," said he, "why may not a man have had such an origin?"

"Nay," said I, "I think the question is, not why a man may *not* have had such an origin, but why we are to believe he had? If any man has a particular predilection for a monkey-ancestry,—as you seem to have at present,—why, as a matter of *taste* merely, I have no objection in the world. I never quarrel about pedigrees—they are always ticklish subjects for discussion. If I went to see the good Welshman whose genealogical roll had, half way up it, the modest notice, 'About this time Adam was born,' and then went on, nobody knows how far beyond such a poor modern date, I should hardly have contested the point with him, but should have let him revel in his pre-adamite *ape*, as I do you in your pre-adamite *apes*, to the utmost bent of his pride of lineage. You merely go a few millions of generations further back—to your great *πάππος*, the *monkey*, and your more venerable *πρόπαππος*, the *tadpole*. Pray please yourself, if it is to be a matter of taste; but if you insist upon it, that it is *reasonable* for you to affirm such an origin and that *I*, too, am a member of your family, I beg to ask *why* you say so? You must not tell me that you know no reason why man may *not* have been thus gloriously descended; you must tell me why you think he was. You acknowledge, do you not, that we *now* see nothing,—that authentic history records nothing,—of those transmutations of species of which you talk so glibly? On the contrary, the lines

of demarcation, so far as we can judge, are strictly kept between species and species; and the one has no more tendency to pass into the other, than 'grapes to grow on thorns' or 'figs on thistles.' What right have you to assume,—nay, even to conjecture,—that the peculiar fruit called 'man' has grown on your tadpole-tree.

"Nay," said he, half laughing at this way of representing the matter, and yet half angry too,— "though I grant that we see no such transformations now, how do we know what time, — thirty, or forty, or a hundred millions of years —"

"Pray take your time," said I, smiling, "*ad libitum* ; — it is all at your disposal; you can suppose as long periods as you please; I am quite willing to say I cannot contradict you."

"Well, then, say in a million million *billion* of ages," he went on, rather warmly. "How do we know, in *that* time, what might not have taken place?"

I could not forbear laughing outright. "My dear fellow," said I, "it is, I fancy, of no use to ask what may *not* have happened in a period of time which you do not know, under the operation of causes of which you know nothing. Only, if you ask me to receive, as in the remotest degree a *probable* conclusion, your notion of the transmutation of species, be pleased to give me your *reasons*. If you dream — dream; if you philosophize — philosophize. But pray don't call this style of inference Baconian 'induction.' You will certainly make the great philosopher cry out against you from his 'Novum Organum' there, on the shelves behind you. You have evidently never read a line of him, or to no purpose. 'Is it from *me*, young gentleman,' he will say, 'that you pretend to have learned to talk in this fashion? Did *I* ever teach you to assign as a reason for believing in a fact, or in the faintest *probability* of a fact, *that* you do *not* know something; — that you do *not* know

what might *not* have been done in a time you do *not* know, by causes which, equally, you do *not* know?' Come, tell me your true reasons for saying, or guessing, or believing anything in the matter; for *this* sort of 'reasoning' really will not do even among plain people like myself, — much less among philosophers."

"Well," said he, "the theory of 'development,' fully carried out, requires it."

"Aye," said I; "but what requires your indefinite gratuitous application of the theory of development? Why are we to extend it to phenomena of which we can only say, — Who can tell what *unknown* processes, certain *unknown* causes may have operated through *unknown* periods of time?"

"Why," he replied, "you surely do not deny that the theory of 'development' of the material world out of prior states, and those out of still prior ones, is made out pretty well; *at least*, as regards the successive geological strata which compose the earth's crust?"

"Aye," said I; "now you are coming to something. Yes; I believe as much as you do in *such* phenomena of 'development.' But see how much more logically and equitably *I* act in the argument than you."

"How so?"

"Ask *me*," said I, "why I believe in the gradual development of the geological formations."

"I ask you," said he.

"It is not then," said I, "that I do *not* know what unknown agencies, operating during unknown millions of years, may have done; my conclusion is not something for which I can bring forward no *facts*; but because the *facts* on which I found the opinion are patent and obvious. Physical causes, well known, and in operation now, — though I pretend not to know the varying intensities with

which they may, perchance, have operated at remote periods,—are slowly producing similar results before our eyes; the stages of the phenomena in the past may be distinctly traced: the geologist tells me of his conclusions, and also of *the grounds* of them, so far as his science is a science of induction; and, what is more, my eyes, and not my fancy, corroborate his observations. These observations show that there have been successive conditions of the earth's crust; that in the latter strata there are fossil remains of organic life; that the still visible phenomena—the still legible hieroglyphics of their life and its conditions—attest a beautiful adaptation of the earth at various periods to its tenants, and a gradual preparation for the appearance of man. Thus much observation tells me; but what has all that to do with the proofs of 'fire-mist' transformed into 'solid matter,' or tadpoles transmuted by various stages into rational bipeds?"

I had a little further conversation with him on a fantastical notion he has formed, that there have been no "catastrophal changes," as he calls them, in the development of, at least, the "inorganic" world. That development, founding on inferences from some modern writers, he has decreed must have proceeded according to a law of "continuous change." I wrote him a short letter on the subject, a copy of which I will send you to-morrow.

Yours,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CVII.

TO THE SAME.

[1872]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I know not that your young acquaintance could point to any one passage of his favorite writers to justify, *totidem verbis*, his theory of "no catastrophes;" but he can certainly point to many which justify his inference that they *ought* to hold it.

He affirmed that whatever became of the theory of "continuous development," as applied to the organic world, he must believe it as applied to the inorganic. The letter in reply ran thus:—

"Even as applied to the inorganic world,—see in what gratuitous conclusions and flagrant contradictions your theory involves you. Gratuitous and contradictory I have already shown the theory of development of '*species*' to be, if we are at all to trust that on which alone we can frame any philosophy,—I mean '*induction*.' All *present* facts—and all past, so far as history tells us anything—are against it; and all you can say *for* it, is—that you do *not* know what may take place in fifty million of years or so.

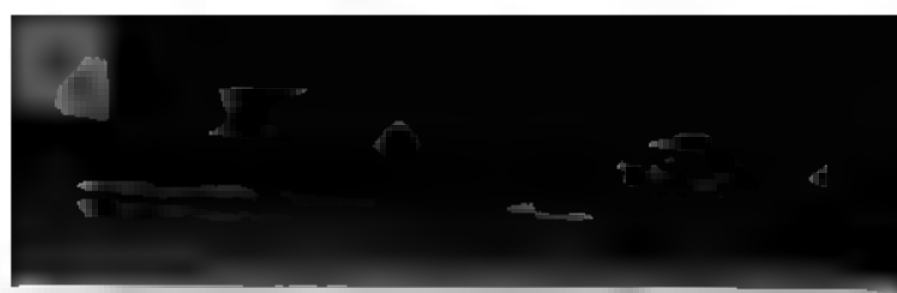
"But I am anxious to show you that your crude notion of '*continuous* development,' whether applied to the transmutation of species,—to the evolution of organisms,—or restricted to the processes of inorganic and inanimate nature, is also '*gratuitous*' in philosophy, and contradictory to *fact*. You say you cannot bring yourself to believe that the '*catastrophal*,' as you call it, has ever characterized the evolutions by which the world has become what it is; that there has ever been anything abrupt, sudden, discontinuous, in these metamorphoses; but that all has been achieved by infinitesimal changes, and by a law operating with incon-

ceivable slowness, in such a way as to elude all observation, except change be measured by centuries, — or, for the matter of that, by thousands of years, — as our units of computation; that as you now find the sea on some shores encroaching on the land, and on others the land gaining from the sea, at the rate of inches in an age, so you think it has always been so; — and that all ‘geological formations’ have been effected in the same manner by a law of *continuous* change. — *A priori*, this may or may not be. If you give it merely as conjecture, I have nothing further to say to it. ‘A dream for a dream,’ another man may say. If you give it as *philosophy*, — I beg to say that it is perfectly gratuitous; for, as before, what can you *know* about such matters? What can you *know* as to whether or not the present *rate* or *law* of change has continued in the universe from epochs which date millions of millions of years back? If you rejoin that in the case of inorganic formations, at all events, you can say what cannot be said in that of the ‘transmutation of species,’ — that such facts as come under your inspection do not contradict such a notion, but rather confirm it, — that all the changes you *now* see are of this slow and ‘continuous’ character, — I remind you, first, (and shall presently show,) that, slow as may be terrestrial changes in general, *facts* do *not* accord with your presumed law of ‘absolute continuity.’ But, secondly, supposing they *did* — what right have you to infer from your observations, infinitesimal in extent and ephemeral in duration, that you can know the law of change to have been the same through an extent of millions of ages, and as exemplified in the history of unnumbered worlds? Is it not to fall into that very error which, in spite of all Bacon’s warnings, has so often beset the philosopher, — that of making the measure of his experience the measure of all *things*; of fancying that things have always been as he has

seen them, — and that an order of things he has never seen, can never have existed? — a notion excusable only in a child, though as often entertained by the sage. In a question like this, the 'uniformities of antecedents and consequents' which we can observe, go for as little as those still more limited 'uniformities' which often mislead the child. Observe, I am not saying that your notion *may* not be true; — I am too cautious, apart from superhuman illumination, (to which I make no pretensions,) to philosophize on such a subject at all. The matter is beyond me.

"If you say that the *facts* from which alone you deduce your inference show that, if you *generalize* at all, you must suppose that the organic changes have, as regards *rate*, always proceeded on the same law of continuity, — I answer, that even if present facts were as you falsely represent them, altogether as you state them, still who asks you to *generalize* for a past eternity, or millions of years ago? Deduce your present law, if you like, and, if deduced *justly* from the facts, you have a right to hold that it *is* now the great law, and will be till you see it changed; I say, till you see it changed; for, as we know nothing of the matter except for the present, you really have no more right to indulge in absolute assertions with regard to the unlimited future than with regard to the unlimited past. Act in this case as you do in relation to *other* laws. You see, for example, that men now exist, and are born, and die, according to an established 'law;' you say, that this is a present law, and you say true; but you do not *therefore* infer that it was always so, — that man is an 'eternal series,' or even that he is of very remote introduction into the universe. Do the same in relation to the facts from the observation of which you profess to deduce the supposed impossibility of 'catastrophal changes' in the evolutions of the universe.





It is not to philosophize, but to let imagination run riot, to argue as you argue.

"But I insist that your theory is also contradictory to fact. You say, you deduce the supposed law from the law of contemporaneous changes observed around you. I have shown the fallacious character of the conclusion, even if you had truly represented present facts. But you have not; the facts we still observe are quite enough to demolish your law of rigorous 'continuous' change. Do you ask how? Why, do you not see that there are even in our ephemeral history, even in the jog-trot of our present regular long-established system, changes of such varying magnitude as to be utterly inconsistent with your law of continuous change, and quite 'catastrophal' enough to show that, at remote periods of our earth's history, 'catastrophes' much more stupendous may have occurred? Has not the earth's crust been often broken? Have not cities and towns been swallowed up by earthquakes in a day, in an hour? 'Catastrophal' enough, I am sure, they must have been to those who were involved in them. 'Ah!' you will say, 'these "catastrophes" are too trivial to be considered as infractions of the general law—they are *infinitesimal* in relation to the entire changes going on on the surface of our planet.' Very well; and would not concussions which shook to pieces whole continents be *infinitesimal* in reference to the changes going on in the solar system? And would not the very extinction of our planet and of a dozen more be an infinitesimal change in relation to the whole universe? You forget that a law of rigorous 'continuity' knows nothing of *any* abrupt breaks relatively large or small,—nothing of proceeding *per saltum*. You confound a 'law of continuity' with something totally different. You merely mean that no 'catastrophe' which you

account 'great' has occurred — the measure being taken from your own experience ; so that here again, like so many other philosophers in other directions, you make 'man the measure of all things.' If your law of continuity is not violated, provided the *ratio* of any change to the sum total of the phenomena unchanged be very small, then it is possible that the most 'catastrophal' change shall never involve what is discontinuous ; for anything, however large, may be regarded as infinitesimal in relation to another thing, if that other be allowed to be infinitely larger. Thus a 'catastrophe' which might demolish the whole solar system would be justifiably regarded as infinitesimal in relation to the sphere whose radius is the distance of the fixed stars. If you apply your 'law of continuity' rigorously, you must admit that the 'catastrophes' which even the present state of things exhibits are incompatible with it. Not only so, but I think it would be more plausible to argue, that as such things as vast earthquakes and extensive volcanic eruptions have occurred even in the comparatively stable and quiet condition of our world, similar events, in all probability, have occurred to a much vaster extent in remote periods of the past, and may again occur in remote periods of the future.

"There is this additional absurdity about the thing, — that your supposed 'law of continuity,' if it is not to be considered as broken by an earthquake, may be susceptible of any conceivable discrete variation, not according only to the *ratio* of the *changing* phenomena as compared with the *unchanged*, but according to the capacities of the observer ! A gentleman who knew only Sicily, would think the 'law of continuity' and the perfect freedom from 'catastrophes' oddly enough illustrated, as he saw Catania sinking into the flood, and Herculaneum and Pompeii buried under lava ; while a travelled cosmopolite, who had seen in twenty

places the traces of similar desolating changes, but had also perceived that the *general* law of geologic change was very slow, could serenely expatiate on the law of 'continuous change;' and if he and his whole planet were shot into the air, a worthy inhabitant of the sun, who saw the faint spark go out, would have the same pleasant reason to insist on the freedom from 'catastrophes;' while an inhabitant of Sirius would hear of the explosion of the sun and all its planets with the like imperturbable composure, as in no wise more than an infinitesimal infraction of the order of the universe and the 'continuity' of its changes.

"In truth, as I have said, *any* changes *per saltum* are sufficient to overthrow the fantastical *à priori* theory, that, in the organic evolution of the universe, change has always been so gradual as to be inconsistent with the supposition of events you vaguely denominate 'catastrophal.' 'Catastrophe' is a relative term. The fall of a cottage is catastrophe enough to those who dwell in it; the destruction of a world is not, if compared with the universe.

"Do I then contend for vast pre-adamite catastrophes? By the light of philosophy — not at all; nor against them; I simply know nothing about them. Nor do you; and to pretend that we *do* know anything, and may pronounce on some airy, childish predilection for an imaginary law of 'continuous development,' is as really to disregard the dictates of all Baconian induction as Aristotle did, when he contended that the orbits of the planets must be circular, because a circle is the most perfect of figures. When will men cease thus to vault to conclusions? Certainly philosophers often proceed *per saltum*, whether physical changes ever do or not; — not *per scalas et gradatim* — according to Bacon's method. To contend that things which took place, perhaps, millions of ages ago must have taken place *in this* or that way only, because our philosopher has taken

it into his foolish pate to patronize some abstract principle, is as audacious a violation of all Bacon's rules as can well be conceived.

"As to what you say, that it is inconceivable to *you* that the Creator should ever have proceeded *per saltum*, excuse me for saying it is absolutely childish nonsense. It is to avow that mere prejudice and preconception shall stand for proof of the way in which God *must* have dealt with the tremendous problems involved in the evolution of the universe. You really have no proof whatever that God may not have alternately employed both 'catastrophes' and 'continuous changes' at different epochs and in different parts of His dominions. The philosopher has nothing in the world to say against it, but that 'it would be quite shocking to him' to think so. Serious consequence! Surely if the Deity had anticipated that such 'infractions' would have been attended with such a 'catastrophe' as a philosopher's having his prejudices 'shocked,' He would have taken care to act only on the principle of a 'strict law of continuity,' and spared that thrice-sacred thing—an *idolum tribus*."

Such was the letter. Write to him soon yourself. . . .

Yours ever,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CVIII.

TO HIS NEPHEW T— G—, STUDENT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

1831.

MY DEAR TOM,

The "Prima Philosophia,—the Philosophy of First Principles!"—well, it all sounds very grand, and I have no doubt it will be well for you to study it, as you pro-

pose, provided it be but in the right spirit and to the right end; that is, just to show you what are the *limitations* of the human faculties, and then the necessity of acquiescing in the fundamental beliefs which those faculties impose on us, without further querulous complaints that you cannot get the impossible demonstrations or chimerical certitude of some so-called transcendental "science." But if you expect, what so many philosophers who revolve these problems perpetually demand, and fancy, in spite of so many failures of the wise, that they will at last attain, — a scientific *rationale* of truths which constitute reason, but cannot be proved by it; or again, which are taught us by quite another faculty than reason, and are as incommensurable with it as a triangle with a sound or an odor, you will be disappointed. When you have got to any such ultimate facts, whether communicated by some different principle of our nature from reason, — as for instance, sense or emotion, — or cognate with reason, as being the fundamental condition of its exercise, though anterior to reasoning, you must rest contented with them, and not go on, still bemoaning your benighted condition, because you cannot demonstrate the absolute identity of "Knowing" and "Being" — or bridge over the chasm between the *me* and the *not me*, to use the affected language of a most pedantic philosophy — or understand the essence of either matter or mind, or the mode of their union — or are compelled to accept, without at all logically unravelling, the relations of our consciousness to an external world; in short, because you cannot see further into a millstone than other people. If you will thus accept the ultimate facts of our nature, whether taught you by sense or reason, or any other ultimate constituent thereof, the study of the "Prima Philosophia" will do you good, by letting you see what are the limits of your possible knowledge, and in-

ducing an unquestioning repose in them. You will learn, as Locke says, "the length of your line," though there are many "depths of the ocean," you cannot fathom by it. If you pursue this science further, if you will try to give the *rationale* of principles which transcend reason, or are incommensurable with it, as being of a totally different nature from it, or are the very foundation of reason itself; —if you will insist on reason's being its own *foundation*, —constructing the *point d'appui* on which itself rests, or by an infinite regression demonstrating, instead of accepting, the principles from which it starts, the "Prima Philosophia" will but leave you in darkness, —as it has done so many thousands more; mistify, not enlighten you, and completely muddle you at last as a just punishment for seeking to be wise above the possibilities of your nature. To attempt to *reason out* principles, which are either transcendental to reason or incommensurable with it, is as vain as the attempt to weigh the imponderable —to see the invisible —to square the circle —to make the eye judge of music or the ear discriminate colors. "Nescitor" may be justly addressed by the senses and the passions and the emotions to the reason, when it attempts, as it so often does, tyrannously to bring them under its own jurisdiction in points where Nature has left them free. The only question with a wise man will be, "Are such and such the *ultimate* principles of my nature, and of human nature in general; if so, I will accept them and trust them; for whether they be trustworthy or *not*, I cannot help it; I cannot go further; they constitute the laws of my being, and I *must* philosophize on them, if I philosophize at all, for I have nothing else whereon to found a philosophy."

There are two golden maxims of the old Stagyrice, which he is fond of repeating in more or less distinct forms,

and which comprise, in brief, all that can be said on the subject. One is, that the Reason must ultimately repose on principles which cannot be demonstrated; the other is more general, and includes it; namely, that the intuitions and faculties of our nature, whether they tell us right or wrong, are all we have to trust to, and therefore must be accepted as the groundwork of all possible philosophy. *If* wrong they cannot possibly be set right, and must go for what they are worth; since to found a philosophy on faculties we have *not*, or on other than we have, is plainly impossible. The main difficulties in this matter, originate in the tyranny of Reason, which would fain, because it is the regent faculty of our nature, make itself despotic over all; pry into things as completely out of its own sphere, as logic is beyond that of the senses; pronounce on the validity of evidence other than its own, and judge of facts which in the nature of things cannot be referred to its tribunal.

I have often thought that if Reason had not accustomed itself to talk just as it pleased, and monopolized the tongue as its peculiar organ; if the other constituents of our nature could have their unrestricted use of it, we should often hear a loud outcry against the usurping faculty. Sense and passion, emotion and appetite, would exclaim against the tendency of Reason to obtrude unlawfully into their domain, under pretence of seeking superior evidence of any facts to which they deposed. No doubt these worthy folks—the mob of the body corporate—would often use the tongue unwisely, as Reason itself often does; and sometimes speak just as if they had no connection with reason in the world. Like frank, blundering, Irishmen, they would, I conceive, utter a good deal of crude sense, mixed with much nonsense, and with the most sovereign contempt doubtless for those *logical*

forms for the want of which it is evident my lord Reason chiefly condemns them.

"What is it?" says Reason, earnestly gazing at a piece of chalk. "Is it anything *out* of me, or is it *in* me? Is it part of the *me* or the *not me*? Objective or merely subjective?"

Now methinks Sense would say, if it had the command of the tongue,— "What a puzzle friend Reason seems to be in! Hallo! there; hav'n't I told you a thousand times that it is *out* of you—that it is part of your *not me*, as you call it in your incomprehensible jargon; -- it's *chalk*, man, *chalk*, and nothing else."

"Sense," Reason would reply, "how often have I told you that you are not competent to decide. . . ."

"And how often am I to tell you that *I alone am* competent to decide this matter, and that it is because you will thrust your reverend head into what does not concern it, instead of receiving my testimony, that all your perplexity arises?"

Sense may speak too absolutely, but in what he says I think there is a good deal of "sense" and "reason" too. But Reason would eye him with an "amere smile of regard." "How shall I believe you," he would say, "when you have so often deceived me? How can I trust you? No—none of you shall deceive *me*." Perhaps Passion would reply in a passion, "Why, what a wrong-headed, suspicious, unreasonable, pragmatist old fool you are! . . . Why should you think we deceive you, at least in a matter wherein we have no interest to do so? You deceive us at least as often as we do you, and get us into no end of awkward scrapes by your false logic. Faith! it were well for you, if you were equally cautious when we *can* and *do* deceive you. Not deceive you, quotha! We find it easy enough, I reckon, when you want to be deceived;



aye — we have deceived you a thousand times, in spite of all your fine philosophy and love of the pure truth. I know nobody more easily deceived than you." And then perhaps impudently winking at Appetite, he might ask, where Reason was at twelve o'clock last night? Whether he was not completely extinguished, and under the table, babbling no end of incoherent nonsense.

Reason, so scrupulous about the "pure truth" when he has got his *speculative* cap on, would hardly think it worth while to pursue this practical topic further, or vaunt his determination never to be deceived with the remembrance of such an ignominious escapade before his eyes. But he assumes a lofty air, and says —

"Peace, neighbor Passion. You are too loud and boisterous; you disturb my meditations. This question of a 'phenomenal' or 'real' world is entirely an affair of mine."

"There," Sense cries, "there you are again. It is nothing of the kind; it is an affair of mine; but you will have everything brought to your standard and measured by your bushel. If not, you are cheated, forsooth, and we are a set of knaves. It is impossible to live in peace and quietness with you!"

"Aye, aye," Appetite chimes in, "you are continually spoiling all wholesome digestion with your fantastical fidgets and sleepless speculation. It is impossible to hiccup without your asking whether it is a 'real' or an 'ideal' hiccup; I can't eat a mincepie or swallow an oyster without your asking whether it is the '*me*' or the '*not me*' that is going down my own throat."

But it is all in vain — for spite of all, Reason will again fall into his brown study, over his lump of chalk. "I can't bridge the gulf over — I can't grasp it," he mutters; "is it the '*me*' or the '*not me*'?"

In vain Sense expostulates with him; tells him that it is

not his province. In vain Sense says, "I don't meddle with your 'syllogisms' and 'intuitions;' don't you meddle with the intuitions of Sense."—But ten to one Sense, and Appetite, and Passion, join in a malicious conspiracy to revenge themselves on the overcautious governor. Only wait till supper time, and they will probably enlighten his High Mightiness as to which is the "me" and the "not me," and as to whether or not he is so very anxious never to be deceived! Nay, it may even happen that, in an hour or so, friend Reason, after trolling out a song to the confusion of all philosophy, and washing with a bumper his metaphysical cobwebs out of his brains, will be found fairly on his back, wondering for his life, whether it is the "he" or the "not he" that lies sprawling there—or whether it is not a "philosopher beside himself!"

Not a soul in all "Mansoul" would be more respected than Reason, if he would but confine himself to his proper province; if he would not resolve to pry into everything; if he would but content himself with regulating his servants instead of attempting to do their work; to see that they do not run riot or waste his substance, or idle away their time; if he would not pretend to be able to perform their duty better than they can. Instead of that, he lets them do pretty much as they like where he can and ought to control them, and meantime runs about, suspecting everybody and pretending that no one but himself is to be trusted, even on points on which he cannot judge, and on which he must trust to testimony. All his puzzle is, because he *will* try, as the saying is, to get a quart pot into a pint pot—to see if "Reason" cannot be "Sense;" and he might as well try to smell a rose with his ears, as decide whether the "not me," as he calls it, is anything else than Sense tells him it is.

"A fine thing, truly," Sense may well cry, "that a man

should assume such airs, who does not know chalk when he sees it — does not know whether it is *out* of him or *in* him — whether it is part of the '*him*' or the '*not him*.'"

I fancy Reason being so laughed at, would be apt to be mistaken for Passion.

I confess it makes me angry to hear Reason so often insisting on the deceptions and illusions practised by those poor, faithful drudges, the senses, — when I consider that his worship is deceived, and deceives himself just as often, or much oftener; and above all, when I consider that for half their time, they are all "in the same condemnation," and deceived alike; that is, every night! I seldom wake without feeling inclined to say to this suspicious, truth-loving gentleman, "Pray, your worship, would you have me think all that nonsense which you nightly amuse or terrify me with, and which at the time you take to be all perfectly sensible, for gospel? Tales of dead men talking, and fishes flying, and men changed into cats, — and syllogisms constructed in defiance of all your boasted logic? — If all this is a part of your *me*, I think the *not me* of honest old Sense is just as trustworthy." To this taunt Reason never made me any rational answer.

By the way, I have been amused when I have sometimes seen the averments of most logical Skepticism that *no* evidence could ever induce its well-poised judgment to believe in a "miracle," when it has but to lay its head on its pillow, and in half an hour it will believe in a thousand without any evidence at all; thinks it is talking quite rationally with a dog, or believes that it is itself transformed into a winged monkey.

Such is a brief lucubration, my dear lad, on the "*Prima Philosophia*," and like most on the same subject is nonsensical enough; but if it at all more vividly impresses on you the great lesson of giving to Reason only the things of

Reason, and to Sense the things of Sense,—but above all, to Faith the things of Faith; and, in a word, to every constituent of our nature, the ultimate facts of which it is destined to certify us; if it teaches the duty of resting in these *as* ultimate facts, which *must* be accepted whether we like it or not; — the term and limit of all our philosophy, because right or wrong, the only *possible* philosophy must be restricted by them and constructed out of them: if it shall prevent you from trying to make things incommensurable coincide, — squaring the circle, — measuring a curved surface by a straight rule, — trying the testimony of Sense by Reason, or the intuitions of Reason by Sense, — it may, I think, be as serviceable to you as many a more profound, and much darker, treatise on "Absolute Belience," and the relations of the *me* and the *not me*. Within its proper province, no more suffer Reason to question the information of Sense, than Sense to question the authority of Reason; and if Reason tells you that the senses often deceive, tell Reason that *it* deceives just as often, and deceives not only others but itself into the bargain.

Your loving uncle,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CIX.

TO THE SAME.

1851.

MY DEAR TOM,

Courage! If you choose to read a paper in your little "Debating Society," of the kind you describe, for the benefit of the three or four sucking Atheists you tell me it contains, I am sure you may find plenty to say. If Erasmus could write in "Praise of Folly," it may not be impossible

to panegyryze Atheism — indeed it is a branch of the very same subject. There are plenty of topics for your irony, and I do not care if I give you two or three brief hints.

For example : — Atheists, I think, are unjustly accused of having no "*faith*;" surely there is no class of men who have so much. In the first place: what transcendent faith is required to receive any one of their hypotheses, all of which seem so grotesque and ridiculous to the rest of the world that not one out of a million can be got to believe them, or even to believe that *they* believe them! What faith is required to believe that exquisite order is the product of Chance; or the exactly opposite hypothesis, that unintelligent Necessity has imposed all-wise law! What faith to believe that men sprang from nothing — or have been an eternal series; or, if you dislike that,—that they were "developed" out of monkeys, and all too without intelligence anywhere at all. It is easy for us unbelievers to ridicule these things; but who can estimate the faith necessary to believe them?

I consider that a still more transcendent exercise of faith is implied in the very prosecution of the Atheist's enterprise. His efforts to convince men of his paradoxes — his truly child-like expectation of success, of a universal Atheistical millennium at last,— what a gigantic exercise of faith is here! All "induction" would go to prove the hopelessness of his project, if any one fact *was* ever established by induction. Atheists appear,—one or two in an age or so,—and when they *do* appear, the great bulk of mankind doubt whether they ever *have* appeared! The world is so little disposed to listen to them—that it pretends to doubt whether the Atheists are really what they affect to be; nay, many doubt whether there can be, or ever was, such a thing as an Atheist; you must take your lantern and search as diligently to find him as Diogenes his honest man. No

one affects to doubt whether there be such a thing as a Theist — everybody knows there are millions of them ; but as to the unlucky Atheist, his very existence, like that of the Kraken, is a perpetual problem : and yet, faithful soul ! he does not doubt that all will at last become orthodox Atheists. Seeing that it is so, what but a "Faith" beyond that of the Syrophenician woman can inspire his hopes of success ? Apart from that, and if he listened to Reason only, he would argue that whether there be a God or not, mankind have manifested such an all but uniform and obstinate tendency to believe there is, that we may be as sure as of any fact ever established by "induction" that he *will* always exhibit it ; that he will be always apt to extend his inferences of *design*, from the analogies of his own actions, to whatever is stamped with the *same characteristics* in the universe around him, rather than believe in the Atheist's unintelligible "chance" or "necessity," or unintelligent and unintelligible anything else ! Any one, therefore, but an Atheist, "full of faith," would give the thing up as a bad job ; he would say, "It is hopeless to contend against what I see is an incurable defect of my 'fortuitous' or 'necessitated' human idiot ; his 'cerebral development' does not admit of the TRUTH being established ; I shan't waste my breath on the reprobate, nor 'cast my pearls before swine.' — Though there is no God, (that *I* am privileged to know very well,) yet I see that Chance or Necessity has so bungled the matter, (as I might justly expect would be the case,) that men will perversely believe in one ; right or wrong in their conclusion, (*I* know them wrong,) yet such is the constitution of their faculties that long experience shows they must and will abide by it ; why should I make the hopeless attempt to convert them ?" And surely for the reason just assigned, if an Atheist were but as full of "reason" as he is full of "faith," he ought cheerfully to

acquiesce in this view, and say, "Could I expect it to be otherwise? or why not at least as well expect it so, as any way? If there be no intelligent Cause of all things, ought I not rather to expect that men would think wrong on this subject than right?—Why should I imagine that the blind cause which has fashioned men, has constituted them rather to see the great truth that there is *no* God than to be blind to it? Could I expect that Chance would not err, or that blind Necessity should infallibly see its way? Plague on the universe! It has so framed *itself*, and man in it, that man will rather believe that there is a Deity than the contrary!"

Now matters being thus hopeless, I say we might naturally expect that an Atheist would quietly "put his candle under his bushel," and *not* "let his light shine before men"—regarding his "teaching" as vain, and his "faith" also vain. Yet see the power of "Faith." Every age or so, you get one solitary voice—sometimes perhaps two, "crying in the wilderness,"—a wilderness, truly,—and proclaiming the advent of that better age when men will renounce all their puerile ideas of Deity. Even under such desperate circumstances, these faithful souls do not despair of the universal conversion of the human race! I profess to you I do not know anywhere such an instance of simple unreasoning belief. I am sure it may be said of such men—"Lo, we have not found so great faith—no, not in Israel, nor even among the Hottentots!"

Another topic of panegyric is, I think, the great fecundity of their theories. Atheists are too often represented as just propounding difficulties and leaving us in difficulties still greater, while they will not readily commit themselves to any positive theory of the universe. On the contrary, I am disposed rather to wonder at the fertility of their hypotheses; for though, unluckily, very discordant, they are various

enough in all conscience. I am astounded at the ease with which a universe can be constructed. If we may trust some of these men, to originate a world is a mere *bagatelle*. Difficult! Why, the Universe may have originated in any of a dozen ways, *excepting* only from Intelligent Power, or it may never have originated at all! The most exquisite and elaborate *appearances* of design, and which stupid every-day people think are most naturally accounted for in that humdrum way, may be accounted for by anything *rather* than that. What originality — what fertility of conception is here! Some say that the universe sprang from a "fortuitous concourse of eternal atoms," which having exhausted, in infinite ages, infinite combinations, at last most opportunely fell into the present form; some, that it is the necessary development of the "essential properties of eternal matter;" one man tells us that all "organic forms" and all "organic life" are the result of the "plastic powers of nature," whatever that may mean; another says that man is eternal; — antecedent men and consequent babies — or antecedent babies and consequent men forever; though whether babies first came from men, or men from babies, must remain an "eternal" puzzle; some say that neither is true, but that man came from a monkey, millions of ages ago, and a monkey from a tadpole millions of ages before that, and a tadpole from — a particle of albumen and a spark of electricity, — millions of ages before that; and these from a "fire-mist" — heaven knows, or rather does *not* know, how many millions of ages before that, and that all this may have been without any intelligence at all! Some say, with M. Comte, that all the appearances of "design" are nothing in the world to surprise us, and do not at all infer it; they are nothing but the "conditions of being," without which things could not exist, and consequently imply only that things *are as they are*, for if they were *not*



so, they would not be — all which is surely as plain as the nose on your face ; some say that birds got wings (nothing easier) by the “appetency” to fly, and dogs stomachs by the “appetency” to eat ; others, on the contrary, that dogs got “appetency” to eat because the *plastic* powers had given them stomachs, and birds the “appetency” to fly because they had wings,— and which is first, “appetencies” or “organs,” “organs” or “appetencies,” may be a doubt, — but surely either will account for the phenomena ; some say that the various orders of animated beings originated in “prolific matter” running in “internal moulds” or “matrices” (whatever that means) ; and if you ask why we do not daily see new monsters, I suppose it must be said that the said “matrices” were all long ago exhausted ; or, if you ask why we do not at least see new individuals of *existing* species originated in this very obvious and natural way by means of such a matrix, I suppose it must be said that the original matrices are all broken to pieces ! Some say that the true doctrine is very different, and that one species has been developed out of another, and transmuted into another by a necessary law ; that though no present facts are in favor of such a theory, yet that is no reason why you should *not* believe (and certainly as little reason why you *should*) that such things may have happened fifty million years ago ; and that you may even see a trifle or two of the same kind, confirming this obvious hypothesis, if you only live for thirty millions of years to come. Others there are who tell us that the whole universe is an *ideal thing* ; and compressing the voluminous phenomenon into the one mind that alone *thinks* it into being, reduces everything to the solitary “ego,”— of which pleasing theory there are at least half a dozen modifications. In these and manifold other ways, has Atheism evinced its fertility of invention ; and, instead of being upbraided for its barrenness and want

of originality, should rather be admired for the facility with which it discovered (when poor common sense thought it philosophy to assign an obvious and adequate cause of all in Power and Intelligence) a dozen unthought of methods of doing the same thing, and proved by example as well as precept that it can dispense with all intelligence, even its own, in the manufacture of worlds !

But I consider the great triumph of Atheistical genius, and the crowning glory of all its achievements, consists in the ingenious logical securities, of various kinds, which it has taken against the possibility of God's making Himself *known* ; so that if there *be* a God, He, with all His omnipotence, cannot manifest Himself. "*Le plaisant Dieu que voilà !*" one may say with Pascal. First, it is shown that He does not exist ; and then, if He *does* exist, that it is not possible for him to prove to us that He does. What so easy ? "I see," says the elder Atheist, "so much confusion and irregularity in the universe, that I cannot believe that infinite intelligence and wisdom presides over it." "I see," says a modern Atheist, "nothing in the universe but the presence of uniform and necessary LAW ; — nothing arbitrary, and *therefore* no will, as M. Comte sublimely argues, for will is essentially *capricious* ;" — so that whatever comes of it, you see the Atheist is safe. If he sees apparent *confusion*, it is a proof that there is no presiding Deity ; if he sees *law*, then, with M. Comte, it is a proof that there is no originating will ! One says there is so much chance, that a God is out of the question ; — another says that strict necessity reigns over everything, and therefore excludes one. "I see nothing," says another, "in all you call proofs of contrivance and design in the universe ; if there *were* design, it would leave such traces, but these are not its traces ;" and for the same reasons he can argue in the same way, if the apparent traces of design were a thousand fold as great



(if that be possible) as they are; hence again the hapless Deity *cannot* create such a world as can convince the Atheist — cannot make Himself known. Once more; — “If there be an Infinite Being,” says another, “a finite mind cannot comprehend Him; and if there be an infinite *Spirit*, a mind that receives its conceptions only through material symbols can never come in contact with Him!” Thus God cannot come out of His *prison* — for such it is — His *prison* of infinite and eternal essence! Who but must admire the ways in which Atheism can not only prove that there is no God, but that if there be one — it comes to exactly the same thing, for he can never certify us of His existence?

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CX.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 12, 1851

MY DEAR TOM,

Your last letter would have been most amusing, had not the subject been so painful. Your description of your young fellow-student's paradoxes is very racy, and shows that you have talents far too good to be thrown away on Atheism. Never did I see a more grotesque monster in logic than the fright of a theory you have portrayed. As Stillingfleet said of another theory — “It is like the bird of Athens, all face and feathers!”

However, you may thank him for conceding that though the argument for a God from “Design” is, in his sage judgment, “worthless,” the infinite probability from *induction*, — from the facts of past experience, — is, that the generality of mankind will never see it to be such; so that the Atheist's “occupation” is “gone,” or his work must be ever

doing, never done! Thus Atheists, though doubtless constituting, according to his estimate, the intellectual *élite*, the aristocracy of humanity, must continue to be what they ever have been, a very minute fraction of the species. I shall not expatiate on the modesty of the supposition, that he, at the age of twenty, or thereabouts, has already climbed up to that peerage of wisdom; nor at the compliment which he pays the vast majority of mankind whom he thus dooms to be plebeian Theists. It is sufficient to have the consolation of knowing that his cause is hopeless; that so far as we yet know, or have any ground to surmise, — the TRUTH, if he have it, cannot be established, and that our Philosophy and Theology, being necessarily the result of the *constitution* of man (whether God or chance originated that constitution,) will still contend for the dogma he denies; so that if there be no God, God will still be acknowledged and worshipped. Impotent indeed must he and the Atheists be, since they cannot get rid of a — Nonentity!

But I could not help laughing outright at the magnanimous declaration, *à la* Hume, that though it be proved that his "Truth" can never be established as long as human nature remains what it is, — nay, though it were proved that his "Truth" threatened the most pernicious and desolating effects, — yet that "Truth" is "Truth," and he must prize it above all things! — that there is no "possession like it" — that "Truth never in the end did anybody any harm" — "that instinct tells him so!"

In *his* case, it must indeed be "Instinct," — for assuredly it cannot be *reason*. Why, what a mere lump of cotton-wool must this youth's brains be! It is natural enough for you or for me to indulge this presumption of the infinite value of Truth; but if notions of Truth and Error be supposed the result of the *unintelligent construction of our nature*, — that nature, moreover, being so constructed that

the majority, it seems, will continue to cling to Error, and not to Truth, — what possible reason can he have to suppose Truth to be such an invaluable possession? *Practically*, it cannot be; for it is monopolized, it appears, by half a dozen Atheists in a corner! According to his theory, nobody constituted the laws of the understanding by which he says he receives "Truth;" and surely therefore it is an even chance whether Truth or Error be the more valuable possession of man, especially as only a few score can ever hope to attain the former!

But every other absurdity dwindles beside his fantastical argument that even *if* the argument from "Design" be established to the full, it will not prove that God is — Infinite; and, therefore, is to go for little! It will *only* prove, he says, that God is capable of having "constructed such a universe as this!" That is, it will only have proved that He could foresee all the relations — devise all the expedients — construct all the laws — necessary for the stable existence of some few millions of millions of worlds! That He had "power and wisdom" sufficient for this *little* business is shown,—but the argument proves no more! Looking to this petty world alone, He has been able to organize the unspeakably diversified forms of animal and vegetable life, —an exhaustless variety of exquisite structures; He has exactly calculated the relations of these to one another, and to the tremendous physical laws with which they stand connected; so exactly that though a very slight error might have involved all in ruin, such error is excluded;—still—still—the argument from design would *only* prove, so our aspiring young genius assures us, that the Deity is equal to such trivial things as these; and that unless we can prove his power and wisdom "absolutely infinite," it must all go for nothing!

He must pardon me. I think that, *practically*, nothing

in the world depends on such proof, in the estimate of anybody who does not deserve to be strait-waistcoated and shut up in Bedlam. For —

1st. *Supposing* the argument (as this theory does) from "Design" just and well founded "as far as it goes;" that there is a God who is possessed of "Power and Wisdom" to the extent in which He has displayed them in His works, — which is *indefinitely* (to avoid our Atheist's forbidden term, "infinitely") beyond our adequate conception; then, I maintain, that even if it were *proved*, that these attributes, — as really beyond our adequate conception as if they were infinite, — nevertheless are *not* infinite; nothing, in the estimate of a rational creature, would depend on it. Suppose, for example, the Divine power and wisdom, capable, if you will, of being expressed mathematically, by taking as a unit of power and wisdom, Hercules and Newton combined; and that the Divine power and wisdom are to this unit in the ratio of 1000, raised to a power expressed by a decimal number with as many ciphers as would reach from here to Saturn, to 1, — would *our* relations to this tremendous Being be in any conceivable way other than they are? Would He not still be *that* Being "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways?" Should we not, long before we had reached a millionth part of the way towards a conception of the meaning of that tremendous "decimal," find all our faculties completely overwhelmed, and all traces of distinction, except in mere words, between "indefinite" and "infinite," lost? Should we not be compelled to say, "This is not infinite, because I am *told* it has *bounds* — but all idea of the *how much* has already vanished before I have integrated the trecillionth of those limits?" Would not *such* a God be entitled to our absolute reverence, homage, worship, obedience, simply because, infin-

ite or not, He would be worthy of the uttermost *all* that the faculty of such creatures as we are could express, even though He were a million times less than I have supposed Him? Nay, if He were a million times less, should we have faculties even to discern the difference? Would He not relatively to us be as absolutely incomprehensible as if He *were* infinite? But —

2dly. I remark, that since, for aught we know, a comprehension of all the relations of the constituents of an actual universe like the present, may demand an exact knowledge of all possible relations of every particle, however minute, to every other, and that through eternal duration, this may involve the very infinitude which the sophist disputes; and, if so, the argument from “Design” proves more than he imagines. It proves that the Divine wisdom and knowledge at least may be, even in the present manifestation of these attributes, not unlimited merely, but infinite. But alas! as before, long before we had completed a millionth part of the computation, God would have become practically infinite to us by our utter incapacity of saying whether He was “infinitely” or “indefinitely” endowed with knowledge and wisdom.

3dly. I must observe that even if God can create, or ever has created, (if such a thing be possible, though I confess it seems otherwise,) an *infinite* universe, so that if we could but grasp it, there would lie before us an infinite proof of an infinite God, our young logician, who thus plays bo-peep with his “infinities,” would be in just the same condition as at present; for long before his conceptions had got half as far as the limits even of this visible universe, they would be utterly confounded, and he would be obliged to take the *demanded* proof for *granted*! Whether the universe, thus looked at with his microscopic eye, were infinite or not, would be still impossible

for him to ascertain. If so, then, though the argument from "Design" (in this case a just induction) would prove God to be infinite, yet as the finite cannot comprehend that infinite induction, the very proof would be incomprehensible to our Atheistical logician; nay, he would be compelled to say that he did not know he had got his required proof even when he had it, and would be obliged to stop short, as now, at what was "indefinite." That is, our sophist would still have it to say that he could not tell whether God was infinite or not!

4thly. Relatively to God, all *our* possible conceptions will be the same, whether God be "unlimited" or truly "infinite;" and that because, whether He be infinite or not, the ratio of the Creator to *us* will be in effect the same as if He were infinite; it will be so, if not from His absolute greatness, yet from our relative littleness, and will be expressed, if justly expressed at all, by the symbols by which we denote our only possible conceptions of the Infinite. The metaphysics of the Calculus may serve to illustrate this matter. It teaches us that it is the *ratio* between two quantities, not their absolute magnitude, which determines their value, when we compare them; and in this light, man becomes *nothing*, — that is, may be thrown aside as an "infinitesimal," long before we get to the conception of such a Being as the Fabricator of the Universe, — to say nothing of His being truly "infinite." *Relatively* to such a Being, *we* are nothing, even if He be not infinite; and zero to unity must still express poor little man's vanishing symbol.

"Une parcelle de matière magnétique," says Leibnitz, when expounding his theory of infinitesimals, "qui passe à travers du verre, n'est pas comparable avec un grain du sable, ni ce grain avec le globe de la terre, ni le globe avec le firmament."



Now what is the *ratio* of the "*parcelle magnétique*" to the entire universe? Such is man to Him who created both; and thus, as I have already said, our "*relations*" to Him are the same, whether He be Himself only unlimited beyond our conceptions, or truly infinite, as you and I believe Him to be. To *us*, the Being who created all things,—conserves them,—can destroy them,—rules us,—can annihilate us,—will judge us,—is God to us, whether He be infinite or not.

5thly. If it be true that the argument from "Design" must be "barren" unless it proves an infinite God, it follows that if God, though infinite, cannot create an infinite universe, which to most intellects will not seem impossible, (rather, the contrary will seem a contradiction,) then, according to the ingenious reasoning of our Atheist, little man would always have it in his power to say that it is simply impossible that even Omnipotence, (let it struggle as it will,) can ever evince itself by its works. The same illustrious sophism would still frustrate the poor efforts of the Almighty; all His works, however His Omnipotence may tax itself,—must be similarly "barren." If a universe were created a million times as big, as beautiful, or various as that we behold; or a third of a million times more stupendous than that, what then? "It is but limited still," the poor finite human particle exclaims.—Truly, I think man is ingenious in making capital out of his poverty—his obscure notion of the "Infinite." It serves him in excellent stead; he cannot comprehend the Infinite—but, nevertheless, he can, by conjuring with the bare word, overmaster and imprison the Infinite itself! The Infinite, so far from infinite, shrinks to nothing, and cannot manifest itself! All that it does, however vast and glorious, must still be *finite*—and finite man can judge of *that*, and pronounce it altogether an insufficient manifes-

tation of an Infinite Deity. So that here again,—as I said in my last letter in reference to *other* Atheistical arguments,—God is much to be pitied in conflict with the superior astuteness of man! I remarked, that if the indications of design in the universe do not prove a divine artificer of it, the same may just as well be said of any other marks of apparent wisdom in any other (and imaginably) greater works of God; so that, as Paley justly says, the Atheist must in effect affirm that God cannot in this way make His existence known at all. And now it seems, by a similar refinement, even if it be granted that the argument from design be *just* as far as it goes, nothing effectual is done unless it prove an Infinite God; and as there *cannot* be an infinite universe, His Omnipotence cannot manifest Him at all. Truly, I think the Deity is in evil case. Exist He may, but He cannot make His existence known. Infinite He may be, but He cannot manifest His infinitude. Omnipotent He may be, but practically He is impotent.

The finite may form an obscure notion of the Infinite, but can never comprehend it. Man knows, in the course of the necessary evolution of thought, that the Infinite *must* be, but the Infinite itself he cannot know; for that would be a contradiction. Let but the Atheist, therefore, make his admission of a Deity depend on the apprehension of it, and nothing can be more happy than his position. If he were Infinite, he may urge, then he could grasp the Infinite, and would see that God was such; if he had no inkling of the infinite, then he could not be troubled with any difficulty as to whether God was infinite or not, and would say, perhaps, that he was satisfied to worship a Maker of “all things.” But now, being finite, and yet having an “obscure notion” of the Infinite, he cannot tell whether anything corresponds to it or not: and therefore he must ever

be in a happy dubiety whether there be an Infinite God or not, and less than proof of this will not satisfy his convenient scrupulosity ! What a treasure, my dear boy, especially in these days, is an obscure idea ! For by it, the ingenious Atheist, let the argument from "Design" be ever so strong, can always grumble, since it can never prove an Infinite God ; — and as for an "unlimited" God. — why that is far too paltry a conclusion to satisfy *him*.

The proper answer to all this metaphysical folly is that I have already given, that if there be a Creator of all things, our relations to *Him* are not altered by these refinements.

I wish I could add that there had never been any Theists who make a needless parade of these same refinements ; and who, in truth, are little better than the Atheists' metaphysical decoy-ducks ; — who are so wedded to some pedantic *à priori* method of proof that they would sooner be Atheists, than Theists by any other road than their own ; sooner let the greatest of all truths perish than establish it by any arguments but such as are, in their esteem, metaphysically *orthodox*. If they, as they contend, have an immediate "intuition" of the "Infinite," and an immediate *consciousness* of an Infinite Being who corresponds to it, — let them, as Locke says, "enjoy the benefit" of their own perspicacity. I am sure that the very obscurest intimations, the merest *inklings* of the Infinite which our consciousness, may give us, are well worth attending to ; but seeing that so many doubt whether there are any articulate utterances conveyed by such whispers of our consciousness ; many more, who believe they are but vague presumptions, — auxiliary to other proofs, but proving little apart from them ; and many more to whom any arguments derived from such sources are incomprehensible : — seeing, on the other hand, that the argument from "Design" is that which most strikes and has ever most struck mankind ;

and lastly, that if it be admitted up to the full extent of the inferences which *such* a universe as this affords, our relations to the Creator are the same, whether He or His work can be proved by us to be infinite, or not, I confess I have not patience to hear the fantastical depreciations of this class of proofs, in which some Theists indulge; merely because they think they can get to the same truth by a darker and more intricate passage! Sure I am that their declamation, equally pompous and obscure, on this point, tends to nothing but to confirm Atheists in their absurdity.

In conclusion, my dear youth, I would recommend you to warn W. F. that if he ever meet with any Being who has the millionth of a billionth of the power and wisdom which (supposing the argument from design, valid) the Creator and Governor of this universe must be endowed with, he will do well not to stand disputing with him as to the extent and limits of his prerogatives. That Being may not have the patience to listen to his metaphysical impertinence, which, happily for him, his Gracious Maker has! The philosopher was wise who would not dispute with the master of thirty legions; your friend will be still wiser not to dispute with Him, who, however "limited," is the Master of so many worlds.

Believe me,

Ever yours faithfully,

R. E. H. G.

## LETTER CXCXI.

TO THE SAME.

1832.

MY DEAR TOM,

I have but little time to-day, to reply to your three queries; but a few words will suffice.

Your remarks on the defects of Paley's Ethical Theory, (which, I was glad to see, never imposed upon you,) are perfectly just. The greatest objection of all, however, you do not touch; I mean, that the utilitarian hypothesis can by no means account for the peculiar conceptions and terms, universal as thought and language, which imply the ideas of *duty*—the "ought" and the "ought not." Let an action be ever so generally, ever so universally *useful*, it could never carry us beyond the notion of the *prudent*, and the conception of *duty* would still have to be accounted for. It is perfectly and uniformly prudent for us not to receive base coin, just as it is perfectly and uniformly prudent not to pay our debts in it; but we should think that a man deserved to be hanged, who applied only the term "prudent" to both. It is prudent, indeed, to guard against being cheated, and not to cheat; but no sophistry can make us feel that prudence is *all* that is involved in both cases: yet if the utilitarian theory be true, ought we not so to reason? It is always prudent to eat when we are hungry, and *also* always prudent not to put our hands into our neighbor's pockets; but the moral distinction between these two perfectly prudent things is palpable enough, and no ingenuity can obliterate it; yet if Paley's theory be true, I see not how we can get beyond the idea of prudence in either case, or how the peculiar and superinduced idea of *duty* could ever originate.

Nothing in my judgment will account for it, except the supposition that we are endowed with a "moral sense," or with what is equivalent to it; that is, either with a single faculty, the province and prerogative of which, is to generate the peculiar class of ideas signified by obligation and duty; or else a combination of powers, the action and interaction of which, in the course of our development, as infallibly leads to these notions, as if we had a separate faculty.

In the one case, conscience would be a distinct endowment — in the other, a resultant of many forces ; but in either case leading to the formation of those peculiar moral conceptions for the existence of which we wish to account, and for which Paley's theory does *not* account.

And here I would remark, that the theory of "conscience," whether it be simple or complex, is not inconsistent with those varieties of moral judgment in men which, you observe, form so plausible an objection to this theory ; for it is not inconsistent with our *experience* that the most undoubted faculties of our nature may exhibit wide deviations from their normal condition, — great irregularities and varieties of action in different individuals of the race ; and these, within the limits observed, may be accounted for by custom, association, mal-instruction. But *generic* conceptions cannot be accounted for, without the distinct faculties adapted to form them, whether the conceptions themselves be right or wrong. Thus the eye may see well or ill, clearly or dimly ; but to see *at all*, — to have the conceptions of light and color, — implies the distinct faculty of vision. Similarly, while, on the theory of a moral sense, or something equivalent to it, we can account for its divariations from a normal state, we cannot, by Paley's theory, account for the very origination of the fundamental conceptions of right and wrong. It can never carry us beyond the idea of prudent or imprudent. Hence, phenomena of human nature, as indisputable and universal as any other, seem to me, on that theory, still to require a solution.

As to your *second* query, how far our modern Atheists are justified in pleading Bacon's occasional invectives against inferences from "final causes," as fortifying their doubts of the validity of the "Argument from Design," I answer, that if they would only read Bacon with candor, they would feel that they were not justified at all. Noth-

ing can be plainer than that he did not mean to affirm, universally, that "arguments from final causes" must be sophistical; but merely that as they often *were* so, and philosophers had been, in every age, but too apt to pre-judge the results of an enlarged induction by their narrow *à priori* conceptions of the *purpose* of this or that, it well became men of science to be perpetually on their guard against such a source of fallacy. But he who said that "he would sooner believe all the fables of the Talmud than that this universal frame was without a mind" could not be the idiot which some of our modern Atheists would make him; nor intend to imply that inferences from "final causes" are universally precarious. They are so very often, no doubt; and this, in laying down the very canons of all philosophizing, was quite sufficient reason for Bacon's jealousy and caution. If a lioness were to say to a lion, "My dear, what can be the reason that those curious bipeds without hair or feathers, which we find such peculiarly delicate eating, whenever we can get hold of them, come into the world without the rougher integuments which our prey in general exhibit?" — the lion might perhaps reply, "It is nothing, love, but a kindly provision of Providence; man is a delicacy specially provided for us nobler creatures; our mouths are not filled with bristles or feathers in eating him. This was the 'final cause' why these two legged creatures have such smooth skins." This, it is true, would only prove that the lion was a bad philosopher; though it is much after the same wise manner that many philosophers have argued from "final causes." But nevertheless, it does not follow that he would be an equally foolish philosopher who argued that if the "final cause" of the telescope is to perform a certain purpose, the eye, with its infinitely more subtle and accurate adaptations to the *same* purpose, had a similar "final cause." In other words, the argument from

"final causes" may, like most things in the world, be used well or ill; and it is against its frequent ill use that Bacon would guard us.

As to your *third* query. You ask how it is that while it must be admitted as a *fact* that men almost universally concur in the belief of a God, and that, if Induction can be trusted at all, they always will, there should, yet be such differences as to the most cogent modes of proving this most cardinal of all truths? and whether there ought to be such various estimates formed of the validity of the different lines of Theistic argument, since those who squabble with each other as to the logic of this or that argument, yet agree in the conclusion? — I answer, that it is in exact analogy with the condition of human nature in general, and there is no more matter of surprise here than anywhere else. All the *facts* which determine human belief and conduct, are less disputable than the *theories* of them. Nearly everybody believes in a material world; but what endless disputes arise the moment we take the question into the field of metaphysics! Almost everybody believes in the great facts of ethics; yet perhaps you will hardly find five hundred who perfectly agree in any one of the many theories of them. Man is called, and justly, by Aristotle, "a political animal" ζῷον πολιτικόν, but you would be troubled, I fancy, to prove by any one line of argument, or any one class of phenomena, the truth of the assertion; certainly you would be troubled to prove that he had some "one political faculty" which led him to construct social and political organizations. You would rather dwell upon a variety of phenomena in his nature, (some of which might appear more important to this man, and others to that,) as justifying the conclusion; you would say that his uniform "political" tendency was the resultant of a great number of forces, the separate directions and magnitudes of which



it might be difficult to calculate. Meantime, this fact of man's constitution remains the same, and nobody disputes or doubts it. It is, I fancy, much the same with the Theistic argument; the fact of man's general concurrence in the belief of Deity is unshaken; and, if we may trust induction at all, ever will be so. God has so constituted human nature, that the general result of the development and interaction of all his powers and faculties is to bear witness to him; though the elements which constitute that result may be too various to be comprised in one connected chain of argument, or sometimes too subtle to be stated in the forms of syllogism; sometimes such as rather to be felt than seen; sometimes in a measure dependent for their cogency on the modifications of the individual mind, so as to be differently appreciated by different persons. Thus, we find the argument at one time, from "design," at another, from "intuition," chiefly insisted on; this man thinks the "phenomena of conscience" form the most conclusive proof; this man rests on irresistible "sentiment," without troubling the intellect at all. Nay, these elements may severally appear at different times, of various degrees of cogency to the very same mind. Hence the folly, by the way, of one class of Theists depreciating the lines of argument which are preferred by others. Meanwhile, the great fact, as you say, remains the same, however men may quarrel as to its theory, and so human nature in every age will have it, — "THAT THERE IS A GOD."

I am glad you have derived so much pleasure as well as instruction from Whately's "Logic;" but let me tell you that his "Rhetoric," especially the chapters on Composition, are equally worth your study. In these days in which the obscure, nay, the unintelligible, both in philosophy and poetry, seems to many young minds so ridiculously, so fantastically seductive, resolve on keeping thought and ex-

pression clear, and study all such writers as may set you an example of superiority, to all the nonsense talked about "perfect perspicuity" being inconsistent with "depth." The greatest thinkers and writers the world has yet seen have *not* been obscure; they may give some trouble sometimes, but their meaning for the most part is plain enough, and with a little extra diligence even their difficult passages become so. But the present rage for obscurity is a transient absurdity, which the next age will utterly despise. If anybody then wants the current German philosophy, and much of our own, he will, for the most part, have to *fish* for it.

Yours truly,

R. E. H. G.

THE END.



## NOTES.

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- Page 16. *Post prandium.* After luncheon.
- " 18. *Pièce de resistance.* A round of beef.
- " 25. *Εβρηκα.* I have found it.
- " " *Cuisine.* A kitchen.
- " 26. *Antiquæ vestigia flammæ.* Remains of the ancient flame or fire.
- " " *Arcanum.* A secret.
- " " *μη θύω.* Not too much.
- " " *Ne nimis.* Not too much.
- " " *Juste milieu.* The true mean.
- " 27. *Ne sutor [ &c ].* Let not the shoemaker [go beyond his last].
- " " *Empreusement.* Dignity.
- " " *Chef d'œuvre.* A masterpiece.
- " 28. *Experimentum gustûs.* Trial of tasting.
- " " *Cuisine.* (See 25.)
- " 29. *Entrées.* First course of dishes.
- " " *Entremets.* Side dishes.
- " 33. *Via dolorosa.* Dolorous way.
- " 42. *Ad æthera latum.* Borne to the sky.
- " 50. *Voilà.* Behold!
- " " *La philosophie De l' Infini, — C'est, dans ces petits mots tout compris.* The philosophy of the Infinite, — it is all comprised in these few words.
- " 54. *De Senectute.* Concerning old age.
- " 55. *De Amicitia.* Concerning friendship.

- P. 60. *Goût*. Relish.
- " 61. *Experto crede*. Believe one who has had experience.
- " 71. *Enfant perdu*. A lost child.
- " 72. *Voilà*. (See 50.)
- " 74. *Bouleversement*. Confusion. An overturn.
- " 78. *Ad absurdum*. To an absurdity.
- " 91. *Naiïve*. Ingenuous.
- " 97. *Capriccio*. A freak.
- " 98. *Idola tribûs*. Idols of the tribe.
- " " *Norum Organum*. A new method of scientific investigation.
- " 100. *Secundum artem*. Skillfully.
- " 102. *Εἰ τοῖς μεθύσκόμενοις ἐκείτης ἡμέρας*  
*Ἄλγεῖν συνέβαινε τῇ κεφαλῇ πρὸ τοῦ πινῆν,*  
*τὸν ἄκρατον ἡμῶν οὐδὲ εἰς ἔτινον ἂν·*  
*Νῦν δὲ πρότερόν γε τοῦ πόνου τῇς ἡδονῆς*  
*Προλαμβάνοντες ὑστεροῦμεν τὰ γὰρ οὐ.*  
 If it were the case that the head of him who gets drunk every day ached before drinking, no one would drink the strong intoxicating wine. But obtaining the pleasure, as we now do, before the pain, we derive no benefit from our experience.
- " 106. *Toto cæle*. Heaven-wide.
- " 112. *Obulus*. A Greek coin of about the value of 3½ cents.
- " 115. *Denouement*. The unravelling or discovery of a plot.
- " 117. *In profundis*. In deep trouble.
- " 119. *Les vieillards sont dangereux*. Old men are troublesome.
- " 136. *Coup de main*. A bold stroke.
- " 146. *Ultima Thule*. The utmost stretch or boundary. *Thule* was the name given, in early history, to the northernmost part of the habitable world.
- " 152. *A fortiori*. Much more.
- " 154. *Probo meliora*. I approve the better.
- " 156. *Honi soit* [&c]. Evil to him [who evil thinks].
- " 168. *Denouement*. (See 115.)
- " 170. *Pièce de resistance*. (See 18.)
- " 178. *Aura*. Breath of air.

- P. 185. *Par excellence*. Eminently, or by way of eminence.
- " 190. *Experimentum fiat in corpore vili*. Let the criminal suffer the consequence of his crime.
- " 200. *Faux pas*. A false step.
- " 201. *Sang froid*. Indifference.
- " 202. *Badinage*. Sport. Pleasantry.
- " 203. *Toto cælo*. (See 106.)
- " 208. *A priori*. From cause to effect.
- " 209. *πρωτον ψεύδος*. The fundamental error.
- " 211. *Ignis fatuus*. A will o' wisp.
- " 214. *Meum*. Mine.
- " " *Tuum*. Thine.
- " 222. *Machina*. An instrument.
- " 223. *Soi-disant*. Pretended.
- " 225. *Pro re natâ*. For the particular case.
- " " *Callida junctura*. Skilful joinings.
- " 230. *Soi-disant*. (See 223.)
- " 241. *Per se*. By itself.
- " " *Quil pro quo*. Value for value.
- " 242. *Brochure*. A pamphlet.
- " 247. *Momenta*. Elements.
- " 252. *A la mode*. In the manner of.
- " 253. *Ex post facto*. After the fact.
- " 255. *Quod aut ratione justæ necessitatis aut intentione piæ utilitatis caret*. Which is not absolutely necessary or has a religious use.
- " " *Quod sine utilitate et loquentis decitur et audientis*. Which profits neither speaker nor hearer.
- " " *Κενον ῥῆμα*. Ῥῆμα ἄρρον. An empty word. An idle word.
- " 261. *En masse*. In a mass.
- " 269. *Instar omnium*. An example for all.
- " " *Minimum*. Smallest.
- " 278. *Je ne sais pas*. I do n't know.
- " 280. *Les gentilshommes les plus polis dans tout le monde*. The most polite gentlemen in all the world.
- " 281. *Virtuoso*. One skilled in the fine arts.
- " 287. *In petto*. In secret.

- P. 288. *Floresco referens*. I shudder at the recollection.
- " " *Absit omen*. May the sign fail.
- " 289. *Delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur*. They delight us at home, they do not hinder us abroad, they spend the night with us, they travel with us, they dwell with us in retirement.
- " 289. *Impedimenta*. Baggage.
- " 301. *Voilà*. (See 50.)
- " " *Quasi*. As if, (used before English words to express resemblance.)
- " " *Similia similibus curantur*. Like cures like.
- " 302. *Non causa pro causâ*. The false for the real reason.
- " 303. *Viativum*. Provisions for a journey.
- " 306. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*.  
What does not appear is as if it did not exist.
- " 307. *Vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona*. Brave men lived before Agamemnon.
- " 311. *Non causa pro causâ*. (See 302.)
- " 312. *Via medicatrix*. The healing power.
- " 313. *Naturæ minister*. Minister of nature.
- " 314. *Similia similibus curantur*. (See 301.)
- " 316. *Non tali auxilio*. Not with such aid.
- " 320. *Furor mesmericus*. Mesmeric enthusiasm.
- " 323. *Tuâ pace*. By your favor.
- " 325. *En rapport*. In communication.
- " " *Populus vult decipi et decipietur*. The people wish to be deceived and are deceived.
- " 328. *Quid nunc*. A news-monger.
- " " *Proh pudor!* O shame!
- " 330. *Post mortem*. After death.
- " " *Ante mortem*. Before death.
- " 331. *Contre temps*. An unlucky occurrence.
- " 334. *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit*. These things it will please us to remember hereafter.
- " 337. *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit*. (See 334.)
- " 339. *De trop*. Too much.

- P. 339. *Brochure*. (See 242.)  
 " " *Mélange*. A miscellany.  
 " 311. *Placebo*. Conciliatory message — literally, I shall please.  
 " " *Bailinage*. (See 202.)  
 " 344. *Sang-froid*. (See 201.)  
 " 347. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who will keep the keepers themselves?  
 " 348. *Caus belli*. Cause of war.  
 " " *Cedant arma togæ*. Let arms yield to the toga, or the military to the civil power.  
 " 349. *Esprit de corps*. The common spirit or disposition formed by men in association.  
 " 351. *Vidi — et victus vici*. I saw — and defeated, conquered.  
 " 353. *Crepusculum*. Twilight.  
 " 353. *Al ἂν βέλτισται ψυχαὶ μαντεύονται ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχειν*. The noblest minds presage that these things are so; i. e., have a presentiment of immortality.  
 " 362. *In foro conscientiæ*. At the bar of conscience.  
 " 364. *Quasi*. (See 301.)  
 " 365. *Al fresco*. In coolness.  
 " 371. *Incunabula gentis nostræ*. The cradle or origin of our nation.  
 " 374. *Quondam*. Former.  
 " 383. *En rapport*. (See 325.)  
 " 387. *Table d'hôte*. A common table for guests at a French hotel.  
 " 388. *On pillâ, on se gorgea de butin; tout le monde se crut heureux jusqu'à ce que le jour ayant paru, les deux villes connurent leur méprise*. They pillaged, they gorged themselves with plunder; everybody was happy until, when daylight appeared, the two cities found out their mistake.  
 " 395. *Roué*. A debauchee.  
 " 396. *Érgo*. Therefore.  
 " 397. *Cul de sac*. an alley with no exit, i. e. a trap.  
 " 404. *Bailinage*. (See 202.)  
 " 406. *Habitat*. Dwelling place.



- P. 413. *Opera omnia.* Complete works.
- " 428. *Hortus siccus.* A botanical collection of dried specimens.
- " 431. *Εὐαγγέλιον.* The gospel.
- " 438. *Perdu.* Hidden.
- " " *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.*  
(See 306.)
- " 440. *Secundum artem.* (See 100.)
- " 467. *Eclaircissements.* Explanations.
- " 472. *Ad libitum.* At pleasuro.
- " 475. *Totidem verbis.* In so many words.
- " 478. *Per saltum.* By a leap.
- " 480. *Per saltum.* (See 478.)
- " " *Per scalas et gradatim.* . By steps and gradually.
- " 481. *Per saltum.* (See 478.)
- " " *Idolum tribûs.* An idol of the tribe.
- " 482. *Rationale.* Philosophical statement.
- " 483. *Point d'appui.* Point of support. (A military phrase.)
- " 494. *Ego.* I. Myself.
- " 495. *Le plaisant Dieu que voilà.* An agreeable God is such an one.
- " 497. *A la.* According to.
- " " *Elite.* Nobility.
- " 501. *Une parcelle de matière magnétique, qui passe à travers du verre, n'est pas comparable avec un grain du sable, ni ce grain avec le globe de la terre, ni le globe avec le firmament.* A particle of magnetic matter which passes through glass cannot be compared with sand, nor this grain with the globe of the earth, nor the globe with the firmament.



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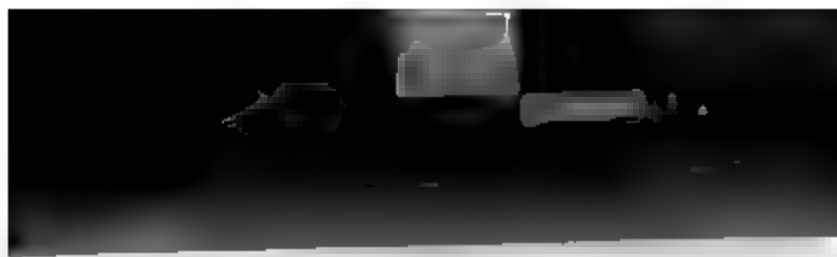
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